Table of Contents

1. ALLEGIANCES
2. Chapter 1
3. Chapter 2
4. Chapter 3
5. Chapter 4
6. Chapter 5
7. Chapter 6
8. Chapter 7
9. Chapter 8
10. Chapter 9
11. Chapter 10
12. Chapter 11
13. Chapter 12
14. Chapter 13

ALLEGIANCES

THUNDERCLAN

LEADER- Thrushstar — white tom with orange-and-brown brindle

DEPUTY-

MEDICINE CAT(S)- Frecklepool - white-and-black she-cat with blue eyes

WARRIORS-
Marigoldheart - splotched light brown she-cat with yellow eyes
Apprentice, Deerpaw, dark brindled she-cat with white chest

Petalshine - white she-cat with pink eyes

Brightcreek - yellow she-cat with large dark-yellow stripes and green eyes

Fernclaw - black tom

Thrushwhistle - beige she-cat with brown stripes and brindle

Dappledpelt - white she-cat with orange-and-black brindle

SHADOWCLAN

LEADER- Soulstar — grey tom with dark grey markings and light blue eyes

DEPUTY- Owlfeather — white tom with yellow eyes

MEDICINE CAT(S)- Smokeleaf — old grey she-cat with curled ears

WARRIORS-
Dahliaheart — red-and-white she-cat

Tempestcrow — large black she-cat with red brindle

Foxfire — fluffy red she-cat

Glazesight — white she-cat with brown brindle

Barkclaw — fluffy brown tom with yellow eyes

QUEENS
Rippleleap — grey she-cat with a blue tint (mother to Winterkit, Autumnkit) (Adoptive mother to Dappledkit and Tansykit)

Swayfern — light grey tabby she-cat

RIVERCLAN

LEADER- Sparrowstar - brown-and-white tom with yellow eyes

DEPUTY- ?

MEDICINE CAT(S)- Beebuzz — light yellow she-cat with orange eyes
Apprentice, Honeypaw — light orange she-cat with dark orange patches

WARRIORS-
Koileap — black-and-white she-cat with orange brindle

Sandleap — light yellow she-cat with green eyes

Rushpuddle — brown tom with tiny ears

Oceantorrent — blue-and-white she-cat

Peachbloom — whiteish she-cat with pink eyes

Marigoldsight — ginger she-cat with lighter ginger belly

Reedheart — fluffy black-and-orange she-cat

Riverclaw — blue tom with one blind eye

WINDCLAN
LEADER- Goldstar — fluffy ginger tom with large paws

DEPUTY- Bearstump — light fluffy brown tom with a stumped tail

MEDICINE CAT(S)- Emeraldheart — white she-cat with emerald green eyes
Apprentice, Leafpaw— yellow-and-brown she-cat

WARRIORS-
Finchblaze — reddish-brown tom with orange eyes

Brightwing — orange-and-beige short she-cat

Scarglare — orange-and-beige small tom

Tawnyflame — brown-and-light-brown she-cat with yellow eyes

Goldfoot — orange-and-dark-orange tom with yellow eyes

Blossomfeather — white-and-pink she-cat

Cattlepatch — tiny black-and-white she-cat

Thrushoak — white-and-brown tom with yellow eyes

Chapter 1

Rippleleap curled around her two kits, licking their faces softly as she stroked her tail across their pelts. "Oh they're wonderful, thank you for helping me bring these blessings into the clan Smokeleaf." Rippleleap turned her head to look up at the grey medicine cat, who looked right back down at her with a sweet smile. "It's always such an amazing thing to bring new kits into the clan. They will be strong warriors, Rippleleap." Smokeleaf walked out of the Nursery which led Rippleleap by herself and her kits. "A tom-kit and a she-kit huh. My brave warriors." She drew her tongue across the she-kit's cheek. Doing the same to the she-kit's sibling. "What are you going to name them dear?" Mewed a more deeper voice, their eyes darting to the two kits. "Oh, Barkclaw they're just so precious. Come here and see your kits." Rippleleap replied, Barkclaw sliding in beside her. "Well the she-kit definitely has your pelt." He rumbled a purr, looking to the tom-kit. "Hey, this fella looks a bit like your mother, Sand'Leap." Rippleleap shuddered. "How dare you mention that filthy cats name in the mention of my kits. He shall be named Autumn'Kit, named after his yellow and slight orange gradient of fur." She purred, Barkclaw giving a nod. "A wonderful name." He huffed, giving the she-kit's nose a slight flick with the tip of his tail. "What do you want to name her?" Rippleleap looked at him and smiled.

"Winterkit."

Rippleleap then laid down to let the kits suckle. Her tail tapping and Barkclaw announcing that he was going for a hunt.

Winterkit opened her eyes as she stay curled up into Rippleleap's fur, her eyes a gradient of pink and blue. She squinted and looked out of the nursery, she could see large blurs of fur. Lots of different colours and sizes. Then she turned her head to look right into Rippleleap's face, she gave a squeak of alarm and stumbled away

with stubby legs, she tripped and gave a mewl. Looking at a yellow fluffy shape about the same size of her, Winterkit got up and looked around.

"Look at that, they've already got their eyes open." She smiled, looking at the two kits.

Winterkit turned over to her and mewled, waddling over to them and starting to suckle at their stomach. She was about almost one moon old, but she hadn't seen or figured out how to walk too well yet. Winterkit looked over to the yellow kit she saw before and stared at their green eyes, her tail tapping.

Autumnkit looked right back at them as they both suckled their mother's stomach.

What Winterkit had picked up from this is that they were siblings.

"Winterkit really likes to study things huh? She's been staring at her brother for minutes!" Remarked Glazesight with a purr.

Winterkit looked up at the huge yellow-white she-cat, milk dripping from her whiskers, was she Winterkit? She assumed so, Winterkit gave a mewl and nestled into the huge blue cat's fur. Falling asleep.

"Yeah.." Rippleleap mewed with a slight sadness. "I just wish Barkclaw was here to see it."

Winterkit braced her paws as she jumped on Autumnkit, giving a yowl of triumph as she beat the tom in a play-fight. She was one moon now and new cats had moved in, Glazesight and Foxfire were the names she picked up. She saw Mudsight sometimes too, besides the other tom she didn't know the name of. Currently all the cats she knows is Mudsight, Glazesight, Foxfire, Rippleleap, Autumnkit, Dappledkit, Tansykit and Barkclaw, her mother told her that Barkclaw was her father. Her fur spiked up as the rustle of leaves caught her out of her thoughts. She looked up to see a large blue tom that started to speak.

"How are you two settling into the den, Glazesight, Foxfire?" She had heard this tom before, but when she had opened her eyes Winterkit didn't see him.

Autumnkit sat beside her with Rippleleap's tail brushed around his little body.

The large tom got mewls of reply from the she-cats. "We're settling in fine, Soulstar." Mewed Glazesight, the white and yellow she-cat giving a friendly nod.

"Yes we're getting in just swell!" Purred Foxfire. "These two little bundles of fur keep us company." She pointed her tail to Winterkit and Autumnkit.

Winterkit gave a small poke of her tongue at Autumnkit then curled back into her mother's belly. There wasn't much kits to play with right now.

Winterkit scuffed her paws across the grass as she looked around, giving a squeal. "Rippleleap! I'm two moons now can't I leave the Nursery!?" She bounced, Autumnkit nodding and giving a yowl of agreeement. "Yes! Please mum?"

Rippleleap sighed. "Alright, but I'm coming too so I can keep an eye on you." She mewed, getting up to her feet and following them out of the Nursery.

Winterkit ran across the marsh and mewed in surrpsie. "Wow! This feels so different! Woah, Autumnkit look at that rock! It's huge!"

Autumnkit nodded. "I bet there's no way you can climb it!" He responded, Winterkit was about to open her mouth before a voice sounded behind them.

"Neither of you will be climbing the Shade Rock. That's where the leader sits."

Winterkit turned around to look at a red she-cat. "Oh, sorry!" Winterkit mewed, Autumnkit tilted his head and questioned. "Who

are you?"

The she-cat gave a purr and responded. "I'm Dahliaheart. The proud daughter of Scarletstar might I add." She bunched her muscles up as she tooted her own horn.

Winterkit opened her jaw in astonishment. "Wow! Rippleleap told me about Scarletstar! She let them join the clan when she was just an apprentice!" Dahlieaheart gave a sigh, tapping her tail with slight irritation. "Yes..Rippleleap and Barkclaw. Those Riverclan rouges." She mewed under her breath, upsetting the kits wasn't really her suit of style.

Winterkit didn't notice however, she was already looking around everywhere. "Look Autumnkit! There's the prey Rippleleap eats!" Winterkit pointed her ears to the prey on the pile of mud.

"That's called the Fresh-kill pile." Mewled a white tom. "And welcome out of camp kits, I'm Owlfeather. Good to finally see that Rippleleap let you free." He purred.

Winterkit turned to him and smiled. Quickly looking back to Autumnkit as she saw him about to pull a cat's tail. "Autumnkit don't do that!" She held her paws around her brother and pushed him back, cuffing his ear. She smiled, her ears giving a flick as wind flew across the whiskers in her ears. She took a breath as she started to talk. "When I'm six moons old now, I'm going to be shadowclan's *leader!*" She trotted around with her tail high.

"Well that will be hard when I'll be a better one! I'll be the *best* shadowclan leader!" Boasted Autumnkit, fur fluffing.

Winterkit rolled her eyes. "In your dreams! Ever since you learnt how to speak you've been a daydreamer!"

Autumnkit knocked her over. "Hmph! I'll be a great leader!"

Winterkit got up to her feet and knocked Autumnkit over, stuffing his face into the dirt as she jumped off right into Rippleleap's paws. "Uh oh..."

Winterkit's small shape fluffed against Rippleleap's front legs as she

rumbled a growl. "Don't fight your brother! Calm yourselves down!"

Winterkit was now in the Nursery, ears giving a flick as Rippleleap towered above her with anger as they fought together.

"You mustn't do that again!" She huffed.

Autumnkit sat right next to Winterkit. Both of their fur fluffed up in embarrassment.

From afar Glazesight gave a soft mew. "Oh don't be too hard on them, it was only their first time out of camp." Although Glazesight hadn't had her kits yet, she still knew a lot about kits and mothering them.

Rippleleap murmured. "Okay..whatever." She settled into her nest and tucked her tail over her nose.

Autumnkit walked forward to suckle on her stomach.

Winterkit shrugged and looked outside of camp, seeing Dappledkit and Tansykit from afar. Her tail twitched as she wished to be out there as well.

Suddenly Foxfire came in with a mew. "Go out there, I won't tell Rippleleap. Plus the kit's will be told to come inside just a bit before she wakes up so you don't miss out." She purred in amusement, settling herself onto a nest as well.

Winterkit looked back to make sure her mother was asleep, then with a giggle she ran over to the two kits. "Dappledkit! Tansykit! Wanna play clan? Oooo, I wanna be the leader!" She bounced.

Dappledkit and Tansykit looked at eachother then back at Winterkit with a laugh. "Yeah sure Winterkit! But me and Tansykit don't want to be medicine cat so we need someone to be medicine cat!" He mewled, kneading the ground as he started to think.

"Ehh..I don't really know, well, Tansykit and I are four moons right now so maybe an apprentice will agree to play with us, aw man if only Coalkit was older! He's only one moon but he'd make a good medicine cat."

Chapter 2

Winterkit sat outside of the Nursery, Autumnkit, Rippleleap beside her.
Tansykit and Dappledkit sat beside them as they didn't have any parents, Rippleleap took care of the kits until they now hit six moons.
Winterkit and Autumnkit knew them well by now. Foxfire was yowling and screaming from the Nursery.
Winterkit's ears flicker backwards. It sounded like Foxfire was dying! "Rippleleap..did you feel like that too when Autumnkit and I were being born?" Her head tilted in curiosity.
Rippleleap gave a soft cuff of Winterkit's ear. "It's not nice to say those things." She replied.
Winterkit gave an embarrassed purr.

After all the yowling and pained squeals from Foxfire, Autumnkit, Winterkit, Tansykit and Dappledkit were allowed to enter the Nursery. Winterkit stared at two red-orange kits in curiosity, her ears giving a flick. "They're adorable!" She mewed, her tail giving a single twitch.
Glazesight nodded. "I agree, they're beautiful Foxfire." Glazesight purred, giving a swift lick at her stomach. "I believe my kits will be coming soon as well." Her eyes were soft.
Mudsight laid against Foxfire and her kits, not in-front of her stomach as the kits suckled.

Just a day after Winterkit and the other kits had to stand out of the Nursery again, besides Crimsonkit and Spikekit. They were too young to even see! Winterkit looked at Autumnkit then Dappledkit. They slowly turned their head to look at Owlfeather, the deputy. He seemed to be setting out patrols. Once they were able to come back in she saw a small brown and white she-kit.
Smokeleaf was there, looking at the kit warmly. "Welcome Swiftkit, kits." Smokeleaf meowed as she left with a respectful dip of her head.

That night WinterKit was playing with Autumnkit in the Nursery, her ears giving a flick.
Winterkit noticed Tansykit chatting with Dappledkit, giving a chirp. "Hey! Dappledkit! Tansykit! Want to play!?" She called. Dappledkit turned and nodded. "Yea sure! How about, follow the leader?" He purred.
Winterkit nodded happily in agreement. "Yes! Can I be the leader!?"
Dappledkit shrugged to gesture he didn't care. Autumnkit was asleep in Rippleleap's fur. He wouldn't be playing anyway.
Tansykit nodded. "Yeah sure!"
Winterkit's fluffy fur fluffed more happily. "Yay! Dappledkit will be my deputy!"
Dappledkit rolled his eyes. "Eww! Deputy's are gross!" He huffed. Stomping angrily.
Winterkit sighed. "Okay, Tansykit can be deputy." She smiled, which stopped when Dappledkit hissed. "No!! I wanna be deputy!" He bounced.
Winterkit shrugged then nodded. "Okay. Let's start!" Winterkit stood to the front, Dappledkit stood beside and Tansykit behind.
They all started to trot forward with their scruffy tails up in the air. Suddenly she saw Soulstar among other warriors emerging from the Shadowclan territory in the camp, a large fluffy black and red she-cat with them.
Winterkit looked up at Rippleleap who started to bring her into the Nursery.
"You can come back out when that strange cat has been sorted out my dears." She licked their faces and curled around them, making sure they wouldn't leave.

A clan meeting was called so Rippleleap left the Nursery, Winterkit whispered to Autumnkit. "This is our chance to see what's going on!" She walked over to the exit of the Nursery den and poked her head out to see what's going on. Her paws itched to leave and she was full with excitement.
Dappledkit and Tansykit were standing above them, sharing words, they looked at Winterkit and Autumnkit then left the nursery. She looked at them as they left and then looked back back at the leader Soulstar. She tried to lean in to hear what they were saying but couldn't catch up on anything. Only the words of "Garnet" and "Tempestpaw." She reckoned that this must have to do with the strange cat, she hadn't heard of any Garnet or Tempestpaw. Her tail tapped and she leaned a little bit closer, tripping and being caught by Autumnkit. "Be careful sister! You're going to let everyone know you're snooping." He purred in amusement. Winterkit's fur fluffed up in embarrassment. She gave a small swipe at Autumnkit then continued to listen.

Soulstar's mews beamed. "I will mentor her, Mudsight will mentor Dappledpaw, and Plumflower will mentor Tansypaw. I want to hear no complaints, meeting dismissed!"

Winterkit sighed. "Now look at what you did! I barely heard any of it!" She launched at her brother and started to play-fight, biting their ear softly.

Autumnkit play-fought back, throwing a sheathed paw at her face. They played for awhile till Rippleleap came up to them with angry tail flicks. "I can't believe Soulstar let that menace into the clan, Scarletstar would never." She swooped up a leaf with her tail that blew up in the sky then fell back down, just passing her. She turned to her kits. "Behave, okay? And don't go near Tempestpaw, that's the new one."

Winterkit looked at Autumnkit and Autumnkit looked at Winterkit, they both knew exactly what they were about to do. "Okay mum!" They both left the Nursery, looking for Tempestpaw. They spotted the huge black and red she-cat. Starting to run at them until she

was stopped by Soulstar walking over to Tempestpaw. Winterkit looked at Autumnkit who stared at her wide-eyed, moving their eyes up signalising them to look behind them. Winterkit turned to see Rippleleap. "You can't trick me you two, I followed you both that whole time." She bent down and picked up both of them, trotting angrily into the Nursery. "Time out, you stay here till Sun-up." She grumbled, laying beside them and flattening them to the nest with her tail. Winterkit frowned and stared across out of the Nursery, Dappledpaw and Tansypaw were apprentices and she didn't even get to congratulate them! She grumbled, her eyes turning to the one moon old Spikekit, Crimsonkit, and Swiftkit all with their mothers, Spikekit and Crimsonkit with Foxfire and Swiftkit with Glazesight. Winterkit sighed and rolled over next to Rippleleap's belly, closing her eyes and falling asleep.

Chapter 3

Winterkit looked at Autumnkit, they were both about four moons old now and they took up a lot of the Nursery! Everyone was squished. Winterkit walked out of the Nursery, squeezing through. She looked at the twinkling stars that danced around Silverpelt and smiled at her ancestors. Looking back down to adventure around camp. She hopped up onto a rock and looked around, the camp felt so different at night! Now that Winterkit was close to apprenticeship, she felt much taller. Jumping off the rock she gave a random hop of glee, looking around and giving a flick of her tail, she could eat from the fresh-kill pile soon! When she was five moons, like Dappledpaw and Tansypaw those three moons ago! She looked at the three Crimsonkit, Swiftkit and Spikekit sleeping in the Nursery. They were one moon now, they could play games now! She smiled, then turned to see Owlfeather setting out Moonrise patrols. She saw Finchshade's patrol that contained Owlfeather themself, then Dahliaheart's patrol that contained of Mudsight and Hallowedpaw. Who she assumed must be getting a night session from other warriors that aren't his mentor. She said goodbye and good luck then went back to her nest and fell asleep.

Winterkit woke up and travelled out of the Nursery, her eyes scanning the clearing as she looked down and saw her fur beneath her eyes, she sat down, embarrassed and started to lick her chest and fur to smooth it all down. Winterkit saw Tansypaw and Dappledpaw sharing a frog together, they were six moons, lucky. Winterkit herself was only four moons, her tail swished in envy, she couldn't wait to be Leader one day and take care of the whole clan. Plumflower approached Tansypaw, her hairless pelt cold beneath the wind. She started mewing some inaudible mews to Tansypaw and Dappledpaw got up onto his feet and yowled loud enough for Winterkit to hear. "Can I come?" He shouted, his eyes lit up in excitement. Winterkit saw Plumflower smile and respond, Winterkit turned and ducked into the Nursery.

Winterkit awoke to see Sunup. She must've slept in for awhile because the Dawn patrol just came back, she saw Tempestpaw and Soulstar leave the camp, must be a training session. She looked over at Crimsonkit, Spikekit and Swiftkit, who were talking to eachother in small words but happy ones. She hopped on over to them. "Hey, wanna play clan?" She kept her words short so they'd understand. The three kits nodded. She smiled and then turned to Autumnkit. "Hey! Come play clan! Dappledpaw! Tansypaw to! Let's play clan!" The other three kits raced over to them, looking at the younger kits all with different expressions.

Dappledpaw whispered to Winterkit. "Do we have to play with them? They're not smart enough to play clan."

Winterkit nudged him. "It'll be fine! They can learn from it." She then turned to Glazesight and Foxfire. "Can Spikekit, Crimsonkit and Swiftkit play with us!? Dappledpaw and Tansypaw can supervise them!"
Dappledpaw stared at her with her jaw wide open.

Tansypaw purred and closed his mouth, giggling as he huffed angrily at Winterkit.

Winterkit looked at him and shrugged in a 'sorry' then turned back as Foxfire responded. "Fine with me! What about your little Swiftkit, Glazesight?"

Glazesight mewed. "It's all good." She started to wash her paw.

Winterkit turned. "Right! Then it's settled then. I call dibs on leader!"

Dappledpaw huffed. "Awww! Then I call dibs on the stinking deputy." He opened his mouth and pointed at his tongue with an unsheathed claw.

Tansypaw purred. "I want to be a warrior!" She jumped.

Autumnkit nodded. "Me too!" He mewed.

Crimsonkit quickly responded. "Me three!"

Swiftkit batted him. "No me!"

Spikekit hissed. "Me five!"

She watched Autumnkit let out a little laugh. Winterkit, using her tiny claws, scratched his face to make sure he wouldn't make the kits upset. Autumnkit gave a frown, tracing his paw around his face to make sure he wasn't bleeding. Winterkit sighed. "Then who will be medicine cat!?" She looked around.

Adderpaw approached them. "Hey what are you guys playing!? Can I play?" He shook leaves out of his pelt, Winterkit turned to him in happiness. "Yes! You can be the medicine cat!"

Adderpaw shrugged. "Yea sure." He didn't sound too thrilled, but not to angry either.

Winterkit jumped up onto a rock just beside the medicine den, she let out a call. "All cats of Pineclan that are old enough to climb the highest trees gather here for a clan meeting!"

The kits gathered and Dappledpaw sat on a tree stump close by the rock Winterkit sat on.

As Winterkit went on a bundle of juniper berry fell on her head, she shook it off and jumped in surprise, looking down at the juniper she saw scattered that led to the medicine den it made her think. *Am I destined as a medicine cat?* That's insane! Her claws scraped across the rock, she'll be a leader! *I'm not a medicine cat!* Winterkit blinked open her eyes to see Dappledpaw.

Dappledpaw pondered. "You alright there Winterkit?" He tapped her.

Winterkit looked at him. "Yeah..I think I'm going to nap, you can be the leader now." She jumped off the rock, staring at the juniper berries.

Dappledpaw shrugged. "Okay cool, Tansypaw you can be my deputy!"

Winterkit crept into the medicine den. *The best I can do is clean up*

the berries. Winterpaw shrieked as she bumped into Smokeleaf, looking up. "Sorry Smokeleaf!" She dipped her head. Winterkit grabbed a stick that Smokeleaf offered her and she started to stab the berries, nudging them back to her. "Sorry.."

Smokeleaf gave her a friendly stare. "It's fine, I'm sure a warrior will get some more. Plus, the juniper berries aren't rotten."

Winterkit blinked tiredly and realised she must've been sleeping for awhile because it was Sun-down. She walked out of the den and looked around, spotting the huge apprentice shape of Tempestpaw and Soulstar. Hearing in on their conversation. "Night Training is very important, we *are* called Shadowclan after all." He huffed with a purr, walking out of the camp with Tempestpaw beside him, a faceless expression from what she could see. Winterkit turned, seeing Rippleleap in front of her, she hissed in surprise and fell backwards.

"You should be in your nest!" Rippleleap mewed, trotting over to the fallen Winterkit and picking her up by the scruff. "My you're getting heavy! Growing a little bit too quick!" She dropped Winterkit beside her brother Autumnkit and wrapped around them, falling asleep.

Winterkit kneaded the nest and looked up at the stars, eventually falling asleep too.

Winterkit and Autumnkit had been banned from leaving the nursery after they accidentally trampled on a herb. Winterkit felt so bad, Autumnkit wasn't all that bothered. She picked at a leaf until Rippleleap re-entered the Nursery. There wasn't much room in the nursery anymore now that there were seven kits! She shook her pelt. She had overheard Rippleleap talking about Tempestpaw and Hollowpaw getting their warrior names to one of the queens. 'Tempestcrow' and 'Hollowwisp' were their new names. Her ears flicked up in interest. She felt something tug at her tail and with her small unsheathed claws she hit them. Her ears perking as she

realised it was her brother. "Sorry!"

Autumnkit twitched his tail in irritation. "You've got a twig in your tail, literally."

Winterkit rolled her eyes until her mother, Rippleleap chimed in. "You do too! Honestly Winterkit you need to learn your brother isn't lying." She mewed firmly, but Winterkit could tell she was slightly amused.

Winterpaw turned her head to see the stick. It was just out of her reach.

Rippleleap bent down and pulled it out.

Winterkit gave a mewl and threw a paw at the air. But she was thankful it was out.

"You're getting fluffy, Winterkit!" Rippleleap mewed.

Winterkit purred in amusement. Tansypaw bounced into the Nursery with Dappledpaw beside her.

Dappledpaw turned to her and grinned. "You're going to be six moons in two moons!" Dappledpaw said excitedly. "Then you'll be apprentices, just like us!"

Winterkit and Tansypaw rolled their eyes.

Winterkit looked at Rippleleap as Autumnkit stared out of the Nursery. "Can we leave? We've been in punishment long enough, it's been a week!" Autumnkit grunted from behind.

Rippleleap sighed. "You can." She nodded, stroking her shoulder with soft licks. As Autumnkit sprinted out Rippleleap turned to Glazesight.

"I'm going to get some fresh-kill. Will you keep an eye on Winterkit?"

Glazesight purred in amusement. "Yeah sure." She turned to Winterkit and blinked. "You've got a tough mother, Winterkit! A

punishment for a week, ha! I'm sure the medicine cats found a replacement for that herb in a Sunrise." Winterkit giggled and trotted out of the Nursery, leaving the kits and the queens to go breathe the fresh camp air again. Her fur fluffed up in surprise.

Dappledpaw and Tansypaw bolted after her. "We're going to go eat something, want to come?" Tansypaw mewled, turning her head.

Winterkit bounced. "Okay!" She followed them, right now she was only allowed to eat small pieces of prey like scrawny mice or stuff like that. Since she was still able to feast on milk, besides the fact that her teeth were growing in.

Chapter 4

WinterKit let the grit and dirt go over her paws as she stomped them hard into the ground.

Rippleleap drew her tongue over her ear. "Now now Winterkit, your apprentice ceremony will be here anytime soon."

Apprentice, the thought made Winterpaw's ear fluff block up her hearing. Was the juniper berries an omen? Or not? She thought for a moment and gave it one final thought, it must've been! The ancestor medicine-cat's must have brought this to her! Her thoughts were put to a stop as a loud shout of, "Winterkit!!!!!!" was called. Winterkit looked at her brother Autumnkit. "Oh thank Starclan! Thought you went deaf there for a second." He mewed with a hint of amusement in his voice.

Autumnkit shoved his sister to the side. "Look, Dappledpaw and Tansypaw have come back from training!"

Winterkit smiled and walked up to them,

Dappledpaw held three frogs in his mouth with his chin raised in pride. He held his tail flat across the ground and it brought up dirt.

Tansypaw, beside Dappledpaw, held a fat toad.

While Plumflower and Mudsight behind them held squirrels and frogs. Once they all set the prey on the fresh-kill pile, Dappledpaw walked over to Winterkit.

"Did you see my catch, pretty neat huh?" Tansypaw walked up beside him and purred in amusement. "You only caught it because I helped you."

Dappledpaw purred. "Maybe, or I helped you." His tail pointed at her fat toad and squirrel." Tansypaw shook her head, "yeahhh, no." She purred.

Glazesight was stretching her legs. "Oh there's so much more room in the Nursery now! With those two apprentices gone, now everything has gone much smoother! The kits can actually walk around now!" Crimsonkit, Spikekit and Swiftkit were all two moons now. A long time ago they had opened their eyes to show Spikekit's eyes, a flaming orange, Crimsonkit's eyes a reddish-brown and Swiftkit had a unique blue and yellow. Glazesight was very happy about it, infact, she'd talk about it a lot. Swiftkit and the other two were always playing the normal Nursery games while Autumnkit liked to practice hunting crouches and pouncing. Winterkit thought for a moment then got up to her paws. Today, she'd talk to Smokeleaf, today. She felt uneasy in her steps, but once one of her paws stepped into the entrance of the medicine den, memories flooded through her and fluffed up her fur, she gave her pelt a quick lick and she sat down. Smokeleaf was assorting herbs, turning to the apprentice, she mewed, "what's wrong, Winterkit? No thorns in paws, right?" Winterkit shook her head. "No.. bigger things than that." Smokeleaf was more interested now. "What happened?" There was silence that was broken off when Winterkit accidentally stepped on a twig, which caused her to blurt out. "I want to be a medicine cat!" She shut her mouth immediately, her ears flicking back in embarrassment and her whole pelt was ruffled. She didn't know if she was lying to the medicine cat and herself, she didn't *really* want to be a medicine cat, but she must have to be if starclan wants her to. It felt like five sunrises had gone by when Smokeleaf finally answered. "If you wish, it would be nice having a helping paw. I'll talk to Soulstar." She left the den and Winterkit felt a long sigh release from her, she didn't know if it was relief or not. But it felt like a lot was just taken off her shoulded and she gave a stretch. Winterkit realised that the sundown had gone to moonrise, she scattered off to the Nursery and shifted herself beside Autumnkit, but she could barely sleep thinking about what Smokeleaf and Soulstar might've said to each other. But eventually she managed to whirl into sleep. Once asleep she dreamt of what had just happened, Winterkit telling Smokeleaf she wants to be a medicine cat. Did she regret it? Or was it worth it? Winterkit frowned and twitched in her sleep. No, she was sure this was right. Winterkit; medicine cat of Shadowclan. Maybe it could be even better than being a leader! She thought to herself, tail swishing in excitement. She woke up with a start, she couldn't sleep, she would be six moons so soon! In about

two days, Winterkit smiled and travelled across camp, Owlfeather catching her with a mew. "Why are you out of the Nursery, Winterkit? It's late, you know. I was just about to go to the warriors den myself." Winterkit turned her head. "Deputies go to the warriors den?" Owlfeather purred in amusement. "Yea? Didn't you know?" Winterkit sniffed. "No..no I didn't." Owlfeather responded. "Well then where would we sleep?" Winterkit thought for a moment. "Uhh, I don't know..a makeshift den next to the leaders den?" Owlfeather chuckled. "I guess that'd be nice, huh, a den all to myself. Now you, Winterkit, should be getting to your den." He nodded then turned to the warriors den, Winterkit turned and entered to the Nursery. She saw Autumnkit, Spikekit, Swiftkit, and Crimsonkit all asleep, along with the queens. Winterkit sniffed and shuffled between Autumnkit and Rippleleap and fell asleep. Her world giving way into sleep.

Dawn approached and Winterkit's eyes were already open, she hopped out of her nest and cleaned herself up and left the nursery. She saw Plumflower and Mudsight ushering Dappledpaw and Tansypaw out of the apprentices den. Making Tempestcrow angrily pop her head out of the warriors den, "dear Starclan, shut up!" She got out angrily, it was still Moonup, nearing to dawn. Tempestcrow's tail was above her head, which was unnatural for warriors to do. Winterkit shrugged it off and saw Soulstar approaching Tempestcrow for a patrol. Winterkit smiled, thinking to herself about Soulstar and the former 'Tempestpaw.' That would be her and Smokeleaf, but with herbs and medicine cat duties. Winterkit trekked along the side of the camp, watching Owlfeather exit the Warriors den as Dawn was well here now and he called out for patrols, warriors began to cross over to him or file out from the warriors den. Winterkit turned back into the nursery and settled into her nest, she was a kit and she may as well enjoy it now before she becomes an apprentice.

Chapter 5

It had been ten sunrises since she talked to Smokeleaf, she hadn't talked to Soulstar about it yet Smokeleaf told her, but she said she would today. Winterkit had guessed that she would be busy stocking up on a lot of catmint with leaf-bare on its way in a moon. She wasn't all that happy that her apprenticeship was on the worst season ever. But what was good was that Smokeleaf must've said something today because Soulstar was coming up to her now while she was taking a frog off the pile and eating it. "I'd like to talk to you, Winterkit, in my den, Smokeleaf is there too." Autumnkit smirked. "Oo, you're in trouble~" He giggled. Winterkit scoffed. "Shut up." She got up and followed the leader. Once she was among the nest, Smokeleaf was there and she walked out of the den, sitting just behind Winterkit. Winterkit felt stiff with worry. Soulstar mewed, "Winterkit." Winterkit turned to the leader, her ears perked. "Smokeleaf told me what you told her ten sunrises ago, that you wanted to be a medicine apprentice?" Winterkit nodded slowly. "We both think it's a great idea! You will be a medicine apprentice in training for a medicine cat." Winterkit felt frozen in shock, managing to get out the words. "Really!" Soulstar nodded. "Twenty sunrises, which is less than a moon, you will start your training." He mewed. Winterkit's ears perked up, she hadn't even realised how close she was to starting her apprentice training.

Winterkit was stretching and her ear flicked. Autumnkit lay beside her, being lapped by their mother's tongue repeatedly. "Mum I'm fine! Seriously!" Rippleleap was licking behind his ears now. "Nonsense, you're apprentice ceremony is today and I want you both looking sharp." She rumbled. "Winterkit, your turn." Autumnkit got up and sat still, wanting to keep his pelt clean otherwise Rippleleap would wash him all over again. Half-way through Winterkit's washing, she saw Owlfeather sitting on the deputy rock as Soulstar talked to him, Owlfeather nodded. "No patrols until after Sunrise!" He called out, his tail tapping as the warriors looked around in interest. Dappledpaw mewed. "Does that mean no apprentice training?" He grumbled. Owlfeather nodded.

"Oh dang it." He hissed, looking up at Mudsight as the tom's mentor looked right back at him. "You'll be fine." Tansypaw nodded. "Yea, it's not going to kill you to wait a bit."
Plumflower purred in agreement. By that time the conversation was over, Winterkit's pelt was clean and the words were called out, by Soulstar.
"All cats old enough to seek through the darkest shadows, gather under the Shade Rock for a clan meeting!" Rippleleap's pelt was itching with excitement, she got up to her paws and walked out, Winterkit and Autumnkit after her, the kits noticed Tempestcrow's pelt was well groomed too and she had her haunches raised, as if ready for something. Rippleleap rolled her eyes. "She's finally put effort into her pelt for once." She mewed, seating herself down among the other warriors, right next to the queens Glazesight and Foxfire, Rippleleap wouldn't be a queen anymore. Although she has been doing warrior duties for a moon now, but she still visited Autumnkit and Winterkit, now she wouldn't have to. "Shadowclan comes with great news today," Soulstar's mew was happy, excited to announce these things. "Autumnkit, for six moons you have learnt the ways of our clan, but now you will learn the ways of a warrior, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and protect this clan with your *life?"* He stared down at the tom-cat. "I do." Autumnkit responded, sure of himself. Soulstar nodded. "Your mentor will be Mudsight, Mudsight, I expect you to pass your skills onto this apprentice and teach them everything you know. You will now be known as Autumnpaw." The two tom's touched noses then sat beside each other as they walked back. "Winterkit, " he mewed, his eyes darting to the she-cat, "you have decided to walk a different path and become, a medicine-cat apprentice, Smokeleaf will be your mentor as she passes on all her knowledge to you." Soulstar dipped his head to the medicine-cat as she walked over to touch noses with Winterkit. "You will know be known as Winterpaw." Cats rose in cheer, excitement beamed from Smokeleaf and Mudsight. Though Rippleleap looked at Winterpaw with an unhappy gaze. "Autumnpaw! Winterpaw! Autumnpaw! Winterpaw! Autumnpaw! Winterpaw! Autumnpaw! Winterpaw!"
Once the cats were quiet, Soulstar meowed. "Clan dismissed! Talk to Owlfeather to figure out the patrols you are on." Warriors gathered around Owlfeather as Autumnpaw happily bounced over to Mudsight, his head raised. Winterpaw made her way over to

Smokeleaf, she felt eyes staring at her, she turned her head to see her mother Rippleleap watching her in surprise now, she felt her tail droop in her realisation that she never said to her mother that she wanted to be a medicine cat. Though she continued to walk with Smokeleaf. Finally Smokeleaf mewed as they stopped infront of Dappledpaw. "Can you show Winterpaw where she sleeps? I need to help sick patients." She mewed softly, giving a nod to Winterpaw, perhaps the she-cat wanted her to make friends.

Winterpaw blinked and narrowed her eyes as the sun was just above the bushes now as it reached sundown. She stretched, her legs ached from Dappledcloud deciding Winterpaw was a one month old kit and showing her the whole camp. Now she noticed Rippleleap was walking towards her, the she-cat sat next to Winterpaw. "Winterpaw, my kit, you never told me you wanted to be a medicine cat!" She mewed, her eyes flickering with concern. "Don't you trust me?" Winterpaw nodded quickly. "I do! I just didn't know what you would say.." she mewled, her ears flicking back. Rippleleap responded, "I'm you mother, Winterpaw, don't keep these things from me." With that, she stood up and left with a flick of her tail. Calling out as an available position for moonhigh patrols. Winterpaw looked at the ground and shuffled her paws. Getting up and walking over to her den.

Chapter 6

Winterpaw panted in exhaustion as she was halfway to the Moonstone, her paws felt heavy but she tried to keep up with Smokeleaf, they stopped by the Windclan border and she saw a large blue she-cat with large, glowing green eyes staring at them, a yellow and brown she-cat at her side, who didn't look happy. Winterpaw's ears flicked onto her skull, but Smokeleaf reassured her. "It's okay, that's windclan's medicine cats." The dark blue she walked closer as the younger she followed just behind, a glint of menace in her eyes. Winterpaw looked at her in distrust, but Smokeleaf turned to look at her. "Winterpaw, meet Emeraldheart." She mewed, turning her head to the blue she-cat and giving a dip of her head, Emeraldheart responded with nothing but just a flick of her tail. The yellow and brown cat jumped beside Emeraldheart. "I'm Leafpaw. You are?" She stared at Winterpaw with a blink. "Winterpaw, my name's Winterpaw." Leafpaw snorted. "Lame." She muttered under her breath, but loud enough for Winterpaw to hear. She frowned, shifting her paws against the grass in insecurity. Leafpaw raised her voice. "Why? Did a winterberry fall on you or something?" Winterpaw stiffened, her eyes flashing with hurt. Her name wasn't that bad. Smokeleaf turned her gaze to Winterpaw, a concerned look in her eyes. Emeraldheart stared at her paws, not saying a word. Leafpaw flicked her tail. "What? I just wanted to know." They dismissed the conversation and walked closer to the moonstone, Leafpaw shoved her in the side and spat at the grass right beside her. Winterpaw let out a quiet sniff of pain. Slowing down to lag behind the others as Leafpaw gladly went ahead of her, tail kinked over her head.

They had reached the Moonstone, Winterpaw spotted two she-cat's with sleek pelts, one smaller than the other. Waiting for them. "Hello Beebuzz, Honeypaw." Smokeleaf mewed, dipping her head in greeting. Beebuzz and Honeypaw did the same, Winterpaw looked at Honeypaw, she looked relieved and her fur was ruffled. A slight

concern fluttered in her chest as her ears went back as she heard paw steps behind them. A black and white she alongside a calico tom approached the she-cats. It was Beebuzz that spoke. "Frecklepool! Monarchpaw! You two made it!" Winterpaw examined the two cats and assumed Monarchpaw would be the small tom next to Frecklepool. Frecklepool dipped her head and spoke. "Sorry we're late, Monarchpaw here had just finished sorting herbs and we lost track of time." Frecklepool purred. Beebuzz shrugged. "That's alright, come on, Starclan is waiting." With a swish of her tail, she turned and was entering a dark, hollow cave. Winterpaw looked up at Smokeleaf, her pelt itching with worry. Smokeleaf turned her head to look at her. "The dark cave is Mothermouth, I'll explain on the way back to camp, just stay close by to me because it's very dark in there." She set off towards Mothermouth and Winterpaw followed, pressing close to her flank.

Winterpaw bit back a shriek as she felt her paws lose balance as there was a dip down in the cave. She quickly got back up on her feet and felt her whiskers touch the cold stone, then a tail flicked her in the face. She scrunched up her face as she held back a sneeze, taking in the scent of the fur she recognised windclan scent and continued to follow that scent trail till she could see a rim of light. She recognised the cat now. Emeraldheart! Looking around as the cat's continued to walk down, she saw Smokeleaf looking at her amused, shaking her head. Winterpaw trotted up beside her in embarrassment. Smokeleaf whispered in her ear. "You're not the first whose done that." She purred and continued to walk forward. Winterpaw could see the she-cat clearer now and guessed that they were really close to the Moonstone. Her paws itched with excitement. But when they reached a huge, bright stone lit up by the stars. Her eyes shut as the light stunned her. Smokeleaf mewed. "Open your eyes, we're at the Moonstone." Winterpaw blinked her eyes open and squinted them. So that's the Moonstone! She looked up at the hole on the top, staring at the half-moon until she heard Smokeleaf's voice again. "Starclan," she began, "I bring you my apprentice, Winterpaw, I pray you accept her the same way you once accepted me." Smokeleaf closed her eyes, her head tilted to the sky. Then she opened her eyes and laid down beside the stone, the

other medicine cats doing the same. Winterpaw copied her mentor and pressed her nose against the stone, feeling herself drift into sleep.

She opened her eyes to a green field and tilted her head in confusion, it was almost leaf-bare though? Winterpaw blinked in confusion until she saw a cat in front of her, they were starry and faded. She was in starclan! This must be a dream. It was a red she-cat with a pelt just like Dahliaheart's, with realisation, she gasped. "Scarletstar!" The leader nodded. "So you're Smokeleaf's apprentice." Winterpaw smiled. "Well she made a good choice, you've got a great life ahead of you, Winterpaw." Scarletstar stared across the starclan fields. "How about we go see a medicine cat, they'll know your path better." Winterpaw spotted a brown and white she-cat sunbathung. "Fawnheart!" Scarletstar called, Fawnheart lifted her head and trotted towards them. "This is Winterpaw, Smokeleaf's apprentice." Fawnheart looked at the apprentice and gave a smile. "Another medicine cat for shadowclan? Just what it needs." She dipped her head. "I can already see you've got quite the future ahead of you Winterpaw." Winterpaw was looking around and her eyes widened as she saw Soulstar, the two cats were following her gaze. "Oh, Winterpaw that's just Soulstar's lives, he can't see or hear us until he's truly joined the ranks of starclan," Scarletstar frowned. "He's only got two lives left..he'll be joining the ranks of starclan sooner than he knows it." Fawnheart looked at the former shadowclan leader sympathetically. "Paintstar is over there. He's got eight lives left so he's hardly visible." She pointed her muzzle. "We don't know about GoldStar and SparrowStar. But th-" her words were cut off by a nudge in the shoulder from Scarletstar. "It's almost Dawn." The two she-cats turned to look at Winterpaw. "We wish you luck as a medicine cat Winterpaw, we will be watching every paw step." Mewled Fawnheart as they both faded away and Winterpaw felt her eyes open as she looked at the other waking medicine cats. None of them said anything to each other so neither did she. Instead Winterpaw got up to follow Smokeleaf up the cave and back to camp. The medicine cats dipped their heads to one another in farewell.

Smokeleaf and Winterpaw had arrived back to camp, they had passed the Dawn patrol and now that they were back at camp all the warriors were already up, including the kits too. Winterpaw let out a yawn. Smokeleaf seemed to have notice because she mewed to her. "Go to your nest and get some rest, I'll be there soon." Winterpaw thankfully dipped her head and walked over to the medicine den, curling up as her tail fur brushed her paws. From the glimpse of her eye she saw the Dawn patrol had came back with tons of prey, she realised how hungry she was but sleep gaped at her like an angry badger. She closed her eyes and drifted into sleep.

Winterpaw woke up to see the Sunrise patrol leaving and realised she hadn't slept that long. She stretched and trotted out of her nest, surprised to see Smokeleaf wasn't there, she saw the medicine cat was talking to Owlfeather and she got closer to listen. Hearing the words. "By Sundown please. We're low on catmint and thyme and we need to get as much herbs as we can before Leaf-Bare." Owlfeather nodded. "I'll be sure to send out quite a few herb patrols this Newleaf." Smokeleaf nodded and walked off to grab fresh-kill. Trotting over to the medicine den and passing Winterpaw, giving her a nod. Winterpaw smiled at her then went to get some fresh-kill for herself, she picked out a toad and heard the yell of Autumnpaw. "Hey Winterpaw! That's my toad you're holding! I caught it!" Her brother purred and Winterpaw saw him sitting down with a frog at his paws, Winterpaw walked up to sit beside him and eat prey together. "I was on the Sunrise patrol! I caught something before Dappledpaw and Tansypaw!" Winterpaw nodded. "Nice job Autumnpaw! That's my brother!" Autumnpaw lifted his chin. "Yea, I guess I am pretty great." Winterpaw laughed. Taking a bite into her toad. "Well, I'm a real medicine apprentice now. My training starts tomorrow!" Autumnpaw smiled. "Yay! You'll be a medicine cat by the time I'm leader." Winterpaw smiled and finished off her toad. "Well, I'll be going now. I need to check the elders for ticks and to make sure the kits aren't sick." Autumnpaw nodded. "Goodluck, mouse bile is yuck!" He stuck out his tongue in disgust. Winterpaw purred in amusement as she went to the medicine den to collect

mouse bile, picking up a stick on her way to collect the mouse bile with. She looked at her tail and realised how many sticks are already in it, the dust her tail picked up and sticks are just annoying. Winterpaw frowned and turned her head and kept on walking, once she got the mouse bile she turned tail to the elders den.

Chapter 7

Winterpaw saw Crimsonkit staring at her while she was checking up on the complaining Spikekit who was pushing her with her paws. "Why did you choose to be a medicine cat? Why didn't you wanna be a warrior?" Winterpaw opened her moth to answer as Spikekit stopped her with a hiss. "Back off! I'm not sick!" Winterpaw gave her a last sniff. "I guess not, beside your sick attitude." She grinned as Spikekit growled angrily. "It's your turn Crimsonkit." Crimsonkit blinked. "Okay.." he grumbled, "although, I don't really feel all that sick." Winterpaw rolled her eyes, shifting over to the kit. "You still haven't answered my question, why did you become a medicine cat?" He gave a shiver as the medicine apprentice shoved her nose into his fur. Then she stopped. *Why did you become a medicine cat?* The question repeated in her head. She closed her eyes and thought of what to say. Crimsonkit mewed. "Winterpaw you haven't answered the question." He mewed sing-song like. Foxfire butted in. "Calm down with the questions, Winterpaw is just here to check for fevers, if you've got questions you can ask questions to elders later." She purred in amusement and gave a nod to Winterpaw. Winterpaw gave a blink in thanks.

As she left she heard Spikekit jump at Crimsonkit as they started to play fight, she crossed Glazesight who was heading back to her sleeping kit Swiftkit. Winterpaw dipped her head as she passed the queen and headed into the Medicine den to see Smokeleaf sorting out rotting herbs and herbs that were doing well. "Say Winterpaw, we're low on chervil, will you tell the herb patrol that? And if you can't find them then collect chervil yourself please." She mewed,

turning back to sort through herbs. Winterpaw nodded. "Alright." She was excited, Autumnpaw was on that patrol! She ran outside of the camp, her tail kinked over her head as she raced through the forest, her paws light across the ground. "You run like a Windclan warrior!" Yowled a cat from afar, she could tell it was familiar and she raced toward it, realising it was Autumnpaw! Who happened to be racing towards her to. They raced into each other and both fell back. Finchshade walked up to them and shook his head. "Oh Autumnpaw, first you get us lost from the patrol and now you honk into Winterpaw." He chuckled. "What brings you out of the forest Winterpaw?" Winterpaw stretched. "I came to tell you that we need chervil, but seeing your separated from the patrol that doesn't help." Finchshade purred, "well, I could go look for the patrol and you two could go find some chervil, you two are always too busy to hang out now and I think some kin time would be nice." He nodded and turned, opening his mouth to scent for Dahliaheart and Hallowedwisp. Winterpaw smiled as she trotted beside Autumnpaw, once they neared the lake in-front of Carrionplace they saw chervil growing beside a tree. "Look!" Winterpaw bent her head down to grab a bundle of chervil until she felt something push them aside. "You two aren't getting into trouble again are you?" It was Rippleleap! Winterpaw purred in relief. "We thought you were a different clan cat!" Rippleleap laughed. "I don't blame you. I've still got the wits of a riverclan warrior. Sometimes I wish I didn't though." She sighed, as if memories humming through her brain. Winterpaw sniffed, was that smoke? She turned and saw yellow fur loosely caught on a branch. Fire was lit to the bushes! "Fire!" She hissed, her fur fluffing as her eyes darted around in terror. A bundle of yellow fur shot out of the grass and lunged onto Rippleleap. Autumnpaw turned around in horror, lunging at the warrior. "Get off of my mother." He growled, tearing out a clump of fur from their hind. Winterpaw froze, afraid as her eyes widened and her claws unsheathed against the grass strands. Between the flurry of paws she felt the breath knocked out of her. She kicked and hissed and her eyes opened seeing blue and yellow fur having her pinned to the ground. Rippleleap gave a push and the weight was dragged off of her as Winterpaw gasped for air. She regained her balance and stared at the two cats, she scented riverclan. This was a riverclan warrior. "I don't know what you want! Just leave me alone Sandleap! You left me in enough misery being my mother! Why are

you doing this?" Rippleleap cried, Sandleap yowled at her. "You left me, you're nothing but a disappointment to me, you're a horrible daughter," she dug her claws deeper into Rippleleap's fur as she tried to struggle out of her mother's grasp. "You don't deserve your kits." She drew her claws across Rippleleap's throat and Rippleleap let out a screech, her eyes dulled but she breathed still, hazy and ragged. Sandleap looked at her daughter with rage. "You deserve to die slowly, thinking about what you did." Her eyes turned to slits as she swept past and snatched Autumnpaw up in her grasp. Winterpaw reached out her paw and let out a cry, though she was frozen to the ground. "Autumnpaw!" The tom struggled in Sandleap's grasp. "Let me go! Winterpaw!" He cried out for his sister, screaming as he thrashed around his claws unsheathed and flying around in the air. Winterpaw watched in tears as she felt herself lose weight in her legs. She felt pasted to the ground as she shook in fear, her breathing quick and rushed, her fur fluffed. She heard a mew from her mother. "Winterpaw." Winterpaw turned to look at her mother, her eyes cloudy as she looked at her daughter. Winterpaw looked straight back at her mother. "Winterpaw, I want to give you this." Her words were quick and soft, a flower being reached out from her paw. "I was going to give it you when you became a medicine ca, but I guess it's too late." Winterpaw shoved the flower aside and picked up the chervil, speaking in between it. "No! I can heal the wounds! You'll be okay!" Rippleleap stared at her. "Winterpaw," she coughed in between her mewl, "Winterpaw...it's no use..don't waste the herbs on me." Her eyes started to close. "Just take the flowers Winterpaw, remember me with them, I love you." Winterpaw cried, holding her and the flowers close beside her. "I love you too." Her voice shook as she rested her chin on her belly, feeling the rise and fall of her stomach stop. Winterpaw rose her paw and placed it beside her head. Closing her eyes and laying beside her the whole time, the flowers safe in front of her chest.

Finchshade sniffed as Dahliaheart and Hallowedwisp walked beside him. "I think I've got enough herbs, I'll go back to camp." Mewled Hallowedwisp, he ducked his head and lowered his body along with his head to Dahliaheart. Getting up and running off before he had a

slap across his face. Finchshade chuckled in amusement till he smelt something off. "Riverclan." he sniffed again. "Blood, warrior blood." Dahliaheart's whiskers twitched in worry. "That doesn't sound good at all. We need to check it out." They smelt smoke, turning to look at each other with worry they went forward. Finchshade felt the bundle of herbs in his jaw drop onto the ground. Autumnpaw was nowhere to be seen. And there was Winterpaw, her chin and one of her front-paws on Rippleleap, blood was stained on Rippleleap's throat as her eyes were wide and duck-like. Left over rain dripping from the leaves of trees washed out the fire. Finchshade stood the in astonishment, Dahliaheart frozen beside him. The two warriors were shocked, Finchshade summoned a sympathetic frown as he looked at Winterpaw, staring at Dahliaheart. "Come on, she must be grieving the most." He whispered, walking up to Winterpaw. "Winterpaw." Winterpaw didn't flinch, though her ear gave a twitch which had shown she knew they were there. "Come on Winterpaw. We need to take Rippleleap to camp so everyone can mourn." Finchshade looked around for a moment, his ears flicking back as he noticed there was no presence of the golden apprentice. "Where's Autumnpaw?" Winterpaw didn't answer that question instead she stiffened, letting out shaky breaths until she stood up. "He, he got taken to.." she couldn't finish the sentence as her breath started to shake again, "he got taken to riverclan." She closed her eyes, her claws digging into the dirt, a cry escaping from her. "It's okay Winterpaw." Mewed Dahliaheart, slinking down and taking the hind of Rippleleap's weight onto her back. Finchshade took the front and Winterpaw grabbed the herbs, the flowers in her paw, causing her to limp as she walked on three paws with her fourth occupied.

They reached the camp and the clan had mourned for Rippleleap, Winterpaw was still beside her dead body, her scent was taken away from the flowers over her body. Flowers. Winterpaw grabbed a bundle of vines beside her and wrapped it around her left front-leg. Then she wrapped the biggest flower around her ear. With some vine left over she wrapped it around her hind-leg, resting her head on Rippleleap's fur as she fell asleep. As sleep swept over her she let out upset sniffs. Her dream went over the horrible memory she tried to block out as much as she could. "You left me, you're

nothing but a disappointment to me." The words Sandleap screamed rang in her ears. She shut her eyes more and they shot open as she heard a warrior murmuring under her breath in her ear. She turned her gaze to see Smokeleaf giving her a look full of worry. "I'm so sorry Winterpaw." She comforted the she-cat with words. Winterpaw looked up at her. Smokeleaf looked at Coalkit from afar. "A cat is getting their apprentice ceremony in three sunrises, I need to have you there, we'll be expecting company from now on." Winterpaw sniffed. "What'd that mean?" Winterpaw stared at Coalkit, she remembered that the tom-cat came to visit their den not long ago. Winterpaw's thoughts strayed for awhile. Then she went to her den and fell into sleep.

Three sunrises had passed, today was the day. Winterpaw exited the den, yesterday she helped the elders bury her mother's body. Despite only being seven moons, she put hard work into it. Her determination giving her a source of strength. She saw Coalkit cleaning his fur, his eyes closed. Winterpaw stared past Coalkit to Soulstar, who was exchanging words with Smokeleaf. Tempestcrow sat, Winterpaw realised she'd been sour ever since Junipercloud died. Hallowwisp came over to her with a squirrel hanging from his jaws. Winterpaw turned away before she heard a flirty remark from Hallowwisp to Tempestcrow. Winterpaw approached Dappledpaw and Tansypaw who were boasting about what their warrior name might be. "I'm gonna be Dappledclaw for sure!" He leaped up to his paws. "I want something more simple, like Tansywing or something." Winterpaw observed that the apprentice was possessively pressed up against Dappledpaw. She noticed the two denmates were very close. Winterpaw flicked her tail and Tansypaw gestured her forward, inviting her over. "We're sorry about Rippleleap, Winterpaw, we know how hard it is to lose a parent." Winterpaw gave them a blink of gratitude. "Thank you, it's an extreme loss for everyone" She frowned, remembering Autumnpaw. She'd usually hang out with her littermate everyday. Her gaze flitted across the clearing wishing she could still see the golden shape. Winterpaw watched Soulstar leap up onto Shade Rock, she turned to look at Coalkit who seemed to be excited out of his fur. Her attention flicked back to Soulstar as his voice rang out across

the camp. "Let all cats old enough to seek through the darkest of shadows, gather beneath shaderock for a clan meeting!" Winterpaw saw Smokeleaf dip away from the elders and wave her tail to Winterpaw, welcoming her over to sit beside her. Winterpaw settled beside the she-cat and looked up at her, following her gaze that sat on the little tom-kit, his fur was well groomed and he sat in the middle of the clearing. Winterpaw focused on the kit, who was buzzing with excitement. Soulstar's voice spoke up again and she lifted her head up to look at him, seeing that the tom had his eyes fixed on Coalkit. "Coalkit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Coalpaw. Your mentor will be Smokeleaf. Smokeleaf looked at Winterpaw, gave her a nod and a smile. Winterpaw gave a soft smile back, in all that's happened today she thought nothing would make it better, she was wrong. Soulstar spoke again, "I hope Smokeleaf will pass down all she knows on to you. Smokeleaf, you are ready to take on an another apprentice. You have received excellent training from your former mentor and you have shown yourself to be calm and patient. You will be the mentor of Coalpaw and I expect you to pass on all you know to Coalpaw.
Smokeleaf, who had left Winterpaw's side and stood next to Coalpaw, touched noses with the apprentice. Winterpaw's ear gave a flick as the clearing rang with Shadowclan's voices of congratulations. "Coalpaw! Coalpaw! Coalpaw! Coalpaw!" When the chanting was put to a stop so was the meeting. Coalpaw and Smokeleaf walked over to Winterpaw as Winterpaw stood up, dipped her head and began to introduce herself. "Hello, my name's Winterpaw, I'm excited to work with you." She gave a wide smile to the tom, feeling excited to have help with all the injured warriors.

Chapter 8

It had been two moons since the death of Rippleleap. She was eight moons now and she still wondered if Sandleap hurt Autumnpaw, she could still hear his screams of help, his wails and cries. She shifted her paws amongst the nest and stood up. Smokeleaf stood beside the medicine shelf, it was Dawn and Owlfeather was just sorting out the Dawn patrol. Winterpaw stretched, turning her gaze to Smokeleaf. "Winterpaw, could you sort out the worn out herbs from the fresh herbs? We'll get some fresh-kill after the Dawn patrol gets back." Winterpaw nodded and trotted over to the medicine shelf. Smokeleaf nodded. "I'm going to check on the kits and elders and see how they're doing for this Leaf-Fall." Winterpaw was shifting through the herbs for awhile and Smokeleaf reappeared, she looked calm and that reassured her the kits and elders were okay. The time must've flew over her head as she heard chatter, the Dawn patrol was back and they sounded concerned and on-edge. One of the patrol members called. "Smokeleaf!" Smokeleaf turned her head and raced out of the den. Winterpaw's ears flicked back and she got herbs ready for whatever happened because if they need Smokeleaf's attention it'd matter. Smokeleaf came back with a few warriors carrying a black and white tom, he looked young, but his ear was clawed and whatever attacked him went from his ear down to his eye. The two warriors laid the tom down on the nest. Smokeleaf directed the warriors to leave. The two left with a dip of their head. "Winterpaw, could you collect some cobweb please? Make sure to also chew up some celandine into a poultice." Winterpaw nodded, she grabbed a stick that was covered in the webs and she turned, laying it out delicately on the ground, she grabbed celandine and started chewing it up, grabbing a leaf and she spat into the leaf. The celandine pulp laid out on the leaf. She turned and placed the celandine over the tom's eye, he was unconscious but she could see the rise and fall of her chest. Smokeleaf was creating a poultice of dock leaf, chewing it up into

the leaf. While Winterpaw was laying out the cobweb over the black and white tom's Smokeleaf was rubbing the herb across his wounded ear. Winterpaw stepped back and started to clean her paws. She turned and looked at the black and white tom with a curious gaze, her ice blue and pinkish-red eyes staring into his pelt. "I wonder what happened for those scars to appear." Smokeleaf replied, "well, there's no reason to pry into his life, I'm sure the poor thing is startled enough." She flicked her tail and took a breath, Winterpaw stared at the den wall, thinking, her thoughts were cut off as Smokeleaf spoke. "He is awake." Winterpaw heard the young tom give a surprised breath. She turned her head and stared at him with curiosity, her eyes examining the now awoken tom. The strange rogue was staring at Smokeleaf, his fur ruffled and his eye wide. Winterpaw watched the tom closely and took a step back in surprise as he started clawing through the webbed leaf bundle, a growl erupting from the tom's vocals. Winterpaw stood up in fear, her fur fluffed all around her body as her back raised, eyes wide. Smokeleaf looked at the two cat's in amusement, Winterpaw watched her lower the tom's paws to the mossy nest. "You need to heal before that can come off," she rumbled a purr, smiling at the young tom, "then if you'd like, you can decide if you'd like to become a warrior for our great Shadowclan." Winterpaw's fur smoothed and she sat back down, staring at the tom as he looked at her mentor in confusion. Giving a soft purr of amusement. From the corner of her eye she saw that the Sunup patrol were dropping prey on the fresh-kill pile. Winterpaw looked at Smokeleaf, Smokeleaf gave her a nod and she darted off to get prey for the three cats.

A few sunrises had passed, the tom was figuring out the surroundings of the medicine den quite well, sometimes Winterpaw would fetch prey for him but that was pretty much it, Smokeleaf did most of the bonding. Soulstar had came in and Winterpaw heard the information that the tom went by the name 'Reaper' she didn't understand what that meant, it wasn't quite a clan cat name. Winterpaw looked at Smokeleaf who turned to her. "Could you check on the elders and kits please? We're only one moon away from leaf-bare and I want to make sure the kits and elders are handling it okay. Winterpaw nodded. There was a new kit, Pumpkinkit, his mother died after giving birth to him, his siblings didn't make it either. He was about three moons now, Winterpaw

made sure to check up on the kit every three sunrises. Foxfire was taking care of the kit along with Crimsonkit and Spikekit, Glazesight had left the Nursery to warrior duties ever since Swiftkit had became 5 moons. Crimsonkit, Spikekit and Swiftkit would be out of the nursery in one moon, Winterpaw gave a sigh of relief, it'd clear up the Nursery more and it'd just be Foxfire and Pumpkinkit left in there. Winterpaw prayed to Starclan that he would survive the leaf-bare, she reached the nursery with fresh moss in her maw to change the nests. It was just Foxfire and Pumpkinkit in the nursery, Winterpaw assumed the other kits went to practice hunting and stalking skills. Foxfire nodded and picked up the kit in her jaw, getting out of her nest. Pumpkinkit woke up with a blink of his eyes. "What's happening? Hello Winterpaw!" Foxfire mewed, "we're getting our nests refreshed. Sounds pretty nice huh?" Pumpkinkit nodded awkwardly in the she-cat's mouth. Throughout the conversation, Winterpaw had already rolled up the old moss and replaced new bedding. Placing leaves, feathers and bracken into the nest softly. She placed the old moss in a pile and went on with the other nests.

It had almost been half a moon, Reaper's eye scar had healed enough for the celandine and cobweb bandaging to be took off, the tom seemed upset on the scar on his face, Smokeleaf had shown a deep sympathy for him the whole way through. The mysterious tom had a blue eye after the scar across his eye appeared, his other eye was an orange. Winterpaw found the tom grumpy and not one to talk, she never bothered to make conversation. He got along with Smokeleaf just fine. Winterpaw stretched. Resting her tail over her nose, tomorrow was half-moon, the medicine cat meeting, along with Reaper's apprentice ceremony at Sunup.

Chapter 9

Today was the day, Reaper would be receiving his warrior ceremony. Winterpaw stretched, she didn't really care. Reaper would just be another clanmate just like the others. Winterpaw rolled in the dirt then got up, tracing her tongue over her paw. Reaper was staring at his reflection in the water after his bandages had come off, Smokeleaf had sat by his side the whole time, Winterpaw was sorting the herbs. Spikekit, Crimsonkit and Swiftkit were six moons now, Pumpkinkit was four moons, he still had two moons ahead of him, Foxfire had offered to take care of him but she could tell Foxfire wanted to leave the nursery soon. Glazesight was glad to leave the Nursery. And Spikekit Crimsonkit and Swiftkit seemed to be bursting with excitement, Reaper and the three kits would all be going into training. Soulstar informed Glazesight and Foxfire that their kits would be getting their ceremony just a bit late as people would have to get used to Reaper. Winterpaw had been in the Nursery at the time checking up on the kits as she usually did, leaf-bare was just around the corner. Winter'Paw's thoughts were cut off as Smokeleaf entered the den, holding a big plump toad and dropping it beside Reaper. She had a frog in her mouth. "Help yourself to some fresh-kill and then go get some thyme for us please, we're running low." Winterpaw nodded, she picked up the frog thoughtfully and trotted out of the den, placing it just beside the medicine den and crouching down, tearing parts out of the frog and chewing. Once she had finished it, she got up and stretched. She gave her paws a quick wash then left to go find thyme. She passed the clearing and then went through the exit, her ears giving a swift flick.

Winterpaw crossed the territory cautiously, careful not to bump into the Dawn patrol. There was a puddle in front of Carrionplace, Winterpaw turned to it, trotting over to the body of water. Winterpaw reached the water, the swampy reeds shadowing any fish that might be in there. She spotted a few fish and if she crossed a patrol, she'd let them know. She bent her head down and grabbed some thyme, her teeth wrapping around the herbs. She searched for another bundle, assuming just one more batch of thyme would be good before she went back. She saw thyme laying near the borage, from the corner of her eye she saw the Dawn patrol with prey full in their mouth leaving back to camp, Winterpaw gave them a swift nod. She'd inform the Sunhigh patrol about the fish. Her head turned back to the herbs and she shoved the thyme to a corner of her mouth and picked up the other bundle of thyme. Her maw was filled with thyme and she turned back toward camp. She stared at the slowly frosting grass, her paws feeling cold. Her eyes flicked around at the trees and bushes. Everything was slowly collecting frost, leaf-bare was coming and it'd be harsh. She sighed between the huge bundle of thyme. The leaves had grown just well, which she was thankful for. The herbs and prey were still popular. She felt her paws switch to the familiar path of back to camp. She's learnt her territory quite well after the two moons of learning. Winterpaw reached the camp, noticing from the corner of her eye Reaper was beside Soulstar, she didn't pay much attention to it as she walked past them and swished into the medicine den. Smokeleaf greeted her with a nod. "Just in time!" She walked past her as Winterpaw set the herbs out neatly on the shelf. "Reaper's apprentice ceremony is just about to start!" She mewed, her eyes bright. Winterpaw sniffed. "Alright, I'll be sure to be there." Smokeleaf nodded, and then sat down to clean her fur. Winterpaw realised she should do the same, she lifted up her front leg and licked her armpit, keeping her ears alert for Soulstar's meeting call. She continued to clean her fur, switching over to her chest fur. Then her fur fluffed up when she heard a screech. She looked outside of the den, narrowing her eyes to figure out who the two cats were. She figured out it Tempestcrow was staring at Soulstar as if all his fur just fell off. Winterpaw sat down and gave her fur a few strokes. She must've gotten some crazy news.

Soulstar's voice rang across the clearing. "Let all cats old enough to

seek through the darkest of shadows, gather below Shade Rock for a clan meeting!" Winterpaw saw cats file out of their dens, she felt Smokeleaf's presence stray away from her as she exited the medicine den. Winterpaw followed her and sat beside her. She and Smokeleaf were close to Reaper. Who's expression seemed to be awed. When the elders passed Smokeleaf to sit somewhere, Smokeleaf nodded to the cats who have served the clan for so many moons. She turned her head and frowned. She wished she could sit next to Autumnpaw. She shifted her paws and realised Coalpaw wasn't with them, she turned her head to see Coalpaw sitting behind Smokeleaf, hidden in the bushes. Her eyes big as she gazed across the clearing. Soulstar spoke up again, his voice rippling across the clearing. "As you all know, we've had a cat in our care who was found extremely injured and almost dead on our territory." Winterpaw's ears gave a flick as she heard mewls of protest rising from her clanmates. Winterpaw watched as the cat's turned their gaze to Reaper, Reaper shrunk as his tail twitched and his claws unsheathed. Winterpaw's eye twitched. *Please starclan don't make this a fight.* Winterpaw finally decided to listen to their complaints. "Shadowclan no longer cares for clan blood? What are we, Thunderclan?" Winterpaw heard a voice ring out. Winterpaw turned her head as Soulstar's voice hushed the clan. "Please settle down. I didn't call this meeting to be talked over." His voice turned into a growl, his ears flicking at either side of his head. The clan went silent, turning their gaze back to Soulstar. "Now, after much discussion with Smokeleaf and Owlfeather, it's come to my attention the fate of this cat now lies within my paws. I could either rid him from the clan forever now he's healed or take him on as a Warrior. After an unsuccessful season of kitting where only Swayfern gave life to a litter of two kits, it's become clear to me the answer to my question. Winterpaw saw Smokeleaf giving a smile and a nod of approval, happy that Reaper would be in the clan now. "Reaper has proven to be a strong, resilient cat with use to us and will be *staying* within our camp's safety and assuming the name Reaperpaw per his request to keep his original name. He will be training under our very own Tempestcrow, where he'll learn the ways of the Shadowclan warrior." Winterpaw gave a quick glance at Tempestcrow who wasn't pleased at *all.* This must've been the news she received that made her screech. Her thought were snatched away as unenthusiastic chants began, though Smokeleaf's chant

sounded like she just saw Shadowclan win a war against all the other clans. Winterpaw stared at her paws in boredom as Soulstar began to speak again, she turned her head up to listen. "I am hoping you will all greet Reaperpaw with empathy and meet him eye-to-eye in time as he proves himself to us. Owlfeather has already assigned patrols so you should all know your responsibilities. Clan dismissed." Winterpaw yawned but her ears pricked up as Smokeleaf turned to her. "You're excused from your duties for the rest of the day. Winterpaw gave her a grateful nod. She crept over to a place in the camp and thought for a moment, how much she missed Autumnpaw. She thought of how miserable he must be in Riverclan camp, it made her fur itch and her body tremble. She needed to get out of camp to think about things. So much was happening, her gaze followed the grass that laid out in front of her paws. She saw Tempestcrow and Reaperpaw on her stroll, but she didn't let them know of her presence. Instead, she went over to the tunnel, staring out across into Riverclan territory, squinting her eyes hoping that maybe she could see Autumnpaw from here. She wondered if they gave him a new name. She'd figure that out soon, the gathering was just a few moons away.

Winterpaw was back in camp now, her feet wanted to already drag her toward Soulstar's den, she wanted to ask him about saving Autumnpaw. She's his brother! Winterpaw let out a shaky breath, she missed him so much. Surely it wouldn't be too much trouble just for a patrol to save him? Winterpaw was visioning the look on his face as Sandleap carried him away, his words rang in her ears. *"Winterpaw! Winterpaw help!"* She didn't do anything. She should've done something. Anything. What if he hates her for not saving him, maybe he thinks it's her fault. Winterpaw shook her head. *No! He wouldn't think that. He knows I would've saved him.* Right? She heard cats talking to Reaperpaw and she decided she'd go ask Soulstar now. She trotted over to the leader's den. "Soulstar?" She mewed in a low voice. Relieved as she realised the leader was awake. "What's wrong, Winterpaw?" The tom mewed as he stood up, he didn't seem like he was getting ready to sleep, more so just warming up his nest. "Can't we get Autumnpaw back? From Riverclan territory?" Soulstar paused, staring at her. "And how do you plan we do that?" Winterpaw tapped her foot. "We send a patrol! I bet he's just waiting for us, oh he'll be so happy when we—" Soulstar cut off her

words, "sorry kiddo, but that's not going to happen." Winterpaw's jaw dropped in misery, holding back a wail. "But...why not? Can't you talk to Owlfeather?" Soulstar shook his head, letting out a sigh. "We can't risk getting our warriors killed saving an apprentice. You understand don't you? You're a medicine cat, you have to take care of injured cats all the time. It's not pretty, is it?" Winterpaw let out a low cry, it felt like Soulstar just raked his claws against her chest. She felt engulfed by misery, turning to anger. "No, I don't! They won't die against fish eaters!" She spat, her fur fluffing up. "Do you think your warriors aren't capable enough or do you just not care about losing a valuable warrior, my brother!?" She hissed, her eyes fixed on him, her tail thrashed in anger. Frustration clouding her thoughts. "I'm not sending a patrol Winterpaw." Winterpaw drew her lips back in a snarl. But all that came out was a shriek of misery. Her ears flattened to her skull. "I..." Soulstar raised his tail. "Get some sleep. I need it too." Winterpaw nodded slowly, dragging her paws across the ground as she walked away. She watched Tempestcrow who's eyes were fixed on the leader's den. She looked cross. Winterpaw worried she was angry with her. She sped up and ducked into the apprentice den, curling up and falling asleep. As she entered the dream world, Autumnpaw was there. She let out a squeal. Sandleap was carrying him away. And Winterpaw was yet again plastered to the ground, she turned her head, Soulstar was behind her. He did nothing, just staring at the situation. Winterpaw wailed and tried to escape from her shock and save her brother. "Autumnpaw! Please! No!" She reached out a paw, but Sandleap already dragged him away. Winterpaw fell to the ground, crouching as she was engulfed in sorrow. Soulstar whispered in her ear. "You understand don't you?" Soulstar's words swirled through her mind, making her scream. She felt a prodding in her side and after a few shoves she woke up to see Dappledpaw staring at her. "Dude, some dream you were having, you were kicking and mumbling the whole time. I couldn't fall asleep" Winterpaw frowned. "Sorry." Dappledpaw raised a paw then flicked it down in the air. "Not an issue, but are you alright?" Winterpaw sighed. "I'm fine, I just miss Autumnpaw." Dappledpaw sighed. "I know you do, it must be hard huh." Winterpaw nodded. Dappledpaw was only three moons from his warrior ceremony. Winterpaw had Starclan knows how long. She had to wait for Smokeleaf to figure out when it is her time.

Winterpaw woke up and yawned, she immediately went over into the medicine den to see if Smokeleaf needed help with anything. Smokeleaf nodded to her. "There you are, could you get juniper berries? We're low." Winterpaw nodded, something to help her take her mind of things. She stranded out into camp and went to go collect some juniper. Her tail twitched in annoyance, how could Soulstar do this? Surely he realised how important Autumnpaw was to the clan. Her paws shuffled angrily as her eyes met with juniper berries. She bent down and pulled the stems. Smelling the berries and feeling a bit calmer. Soulstar made her angry, he was a mouse-brain! She realised she shouldn't talk about her leader like that that, but he was being such a fox-heart! Her tail still writhed in anger.

Once Winterpaw collected enough juniper berries, she turned back to camp. When she arrived, her eyes glared at Soulstar, then she turned angrily into the medicine den. Dropping her juniper berries on the twigs that surrounded the tree. Smokeleaf looked at her in worry. "What's wrong, Winterpaw? It looks like something is pulling at your tail." Winterpaw looked at Smokeleaf. "I'm fine, Soulstar has just been, annoying me. That's all." Smokeleaf clearly wasn't convinced. "Okay, if you're sure." She walked away and gave her an affectionate nod. Winterpaw looked at Coalpaw, who was just looking around the den. Waiting to receive an order or something. Winterpaw looked at the she-cat in sympathy, she's been worried on her reputation on the clan ever since she became a she-cat. Even though no cat has hated her for it at all. And if they did, they've been keeping it to themselves. Winterpaw collected herself and sat out in the clearing, fluffing up her fur. She's realised Dappledpaw has took a liking to Tansypaw. She gave a soft nod of approval, those two will make a good couple. She smiled, one day she'll be delivering their kits.

Winterpaw watched as Tempestcrow took Reaperpaw on a training session. She stretched, her jaws gaping in a yawn. The sun was falling and moonhigh was lingering among the clan. Winterpaw looked up at the sky, the moon was almost full. A gathering would be here before she knew it. She was sort of interested on how'd it go, what the clans would think of Reaperpaw. Winterpaw shrugged, she didn't really have an opinion on the grumpy tom. Winterpaw turned her tail around to pull out leaves, twigs, flowers and dried

up herbs that got stuck inside them. She rolled her eyes, how did this even happen in the first place? She shook her head in annoyance as a twig pressed against her paw pad and it drew blood. She licked it and walked over to tell Smokeleaf to help her wrap cobweb around it. "Smokeleaf, I was cleaning my tail and a twig poked my paw-pad. I was wondering if you could help me mend it." Smokeleaf looked at her. "Alright, you furball," she said playfully, "I'll get some cobweb." Winterpaw thanked her and smiled as cobweb was wrapped around her paw. "Thank you, Smokeleaf, feels a lot better." Smokeleaf nodded. "No problem." Winterpaw got back up to her feet and walked over to Dappledpaw who was with Tansypaw. Dappledpaw greeted her with a nod. "Have you seen Tempestcrow eyeing Soulstar like a fox stalking it's prey? Whatever's happened she is angry." He said, his eyes giving a glitter of amusement. Winterpaw felt a wave of milk smell hit her nose. "I just realised, I should be checking on Pumpkinkit and the other kits." She gave a nod to Dappledpaw and Tansypaw, then set off. Pumpkinkit looked at her, his eyes wide. Spikekit and Crimsonkit were curled up sleeping. They may as well why they can, apprentices have a hard job. Swiftkit, Crimsonkit, and Spikekit were all four moons. She smiled, the more the merrier. She could also tell that Crimsonkit has been developing a crush on Swiftkit, and Spikekit definitely wasn't taking lightly to it. She crouched down and met eye to eye with Pumpkinkit, then looked at Glazesight. "Is he doing okay?" Glazesight nodded. "He's doing great, he's a strong tom, he'll grow into a fine warrior." Pumpkinkit smiled. "Hi Winterpaw! I missed you." Winterpaw purred, Pumpkinkit was a good tom-kit, he'll be a good warrior.

Winterpaw walked into the apprentice's den. Resting where Autumnpaw's nest used to be, thinking about how Riverclan was treating him, she'd see how he was at the gathering. The gathering was only a moon away, she'd hope her brother will find a way back to Shadowclan. Or maybe was keeping too much of a close guard on him. Winterpaw frowned and her tail flicked side to side. She wondered if he even wanted to come back to Shadowclan, Winterpaw frowned, maybe Autumnpaw thinks she isn't his sister anymore and found a new one. Winterpaw looked at the starts filtering through the roof of the den, praying to Starclan, hoping that Autumnpaw still loved her. Then closed her eyes and after a

few heartbeats of taking in the owls and wind as she slowly started to doze off, she heard Dappledpaw and Tansypaw shuffle in their nests. Then once they were quiet and comfortable. She finally managed to fall asleep, as the sounds of earth died away as dreams took her over.

Sunup filtered through the apprentices den, Winterpaw hauled herself up and walked out of it, seeing Soulstar up on the rock. She gave a swish of her tail in anger. Soulstar called, "let all cats old enough to stalk through the darkest shadows, gather around for a clan meeting!" Warriors coming back from patrols sat down as every other cat sat down too, all gathered and ready for Dappledpaw- the warrior ceremony! Winterpaw had completely forgotten. She fixed herself up, sitting among the other cats, Dappledpaw and Tansypaw came up, full with pride in their eyes. They sat amongst the others as Soulstar went on. "Two apprentices, both Dappledpaw and Tansypaw, have reached eleven moons. The sooner the better, we are short on warriors." Soulstar explained, raking his gaze over the cats. "Dappledpaw." Dappledpaw stood up and walked forward and Soulstar hopped down from the Shade Rock and looked up at the sky. "I, Soulstar, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. He has trained hard to understand the noble ways of your code, and I commend him to you as a warrior in his turn." He then turned his head to Dappledpaw. "Dappledpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend this clan, even at the cost of your life?" Dappledpaw responded with confidence, "I do." Soulstar responded, "then, by the powers of Starclan. I give you your warrior name. Dappledpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Dappled*cloud*. Starclan honours your bravery and courage. And we welcome you as a warrior of Shadowclan!" Dappledcloud smiled, his eyes lighting up as he dipped his head and padded back to where he was sitting before. "Tansypaw." Tansypaw walked up, her fur flat but her eyes wide. Soulstar, yet again, looked up at the sky. "I, Soulstar, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. She has trained hard to understand the noble ways of your code, and I commend her to you as a warrior in her turn." - then turned his head to Tansypaw. "Tansypaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend this clan, even at the cost of your life?" Tansypaw stopped for a moment, the

whiskers in her ear being blown by the wind. "I do." Soulstar smiled and responded, "then, by the powers of Starclan. I give you your warrior name. Tansypaw, from this moment on you will be known as Tansy*sun*. Starclan honours your agility and calm nature." As Tansysun sat down, the clans rippled in cheers. "Dappledcloud! Tansysun! Dappledcloud! Tansysun! Dappledcloud! Tansysun!" Winterpaw found herself joining in with a smile. She had good faith in Tansysun and Dappledcloud becoming mates, they were always very close to each other and they both shared similar stories.

Chapter 10

Winterpaw strode under the tunnel, following Soulstar and entering through the bushes and into Fourtrees. Shadowclan was late. Windclan's leader, Goldstar, Riverclan's leader, Chimerastar and Thunderclan's leader, Paintstar, had all sat on the rock, staring at Shadowclan. Tempestcrow's tail swished in irritation as the leaders looked irritated and amused. Soulstar made his way up the Great Rock. Shadowclan filed out onto the clearing and all sat down, Owlfeather joining the deputies, despite the deputy's annoyed gaze at their late arrival. Winterpaw was nervous, her eyes shifting around, what would they think of Reaperpaw? She raised her muzzle, whatever they thought, Shadowclan would still be proud. "Cats of all clans," Chimerastar began, speaking first, "the prey in Riverclan is plentiful. Riverclan cats are healthy and well fed." Chimerastar turned her head to Goldstar and gestured to let him speak, Goldstar spoke up. "Windclan's prey is also plentiful, and I would also like to announce a new litter, Scarkit and BrightKit." All clan's voices rose in congratulations and only died down when Paintstar wove his tail to hush them. "Thunderclan is doing well, we are also happy to announce a new litter, Pebblekit." Paintstar smiled then sat down, turning to Soulstar to allow him to speak. Winterpaw turned her head to Soulstar to look at her leader. He puffed out his chest to announce the cats. "Shadowclan announces good news of a new apprentice and two warriors," mewls of confusion rose around the cats. "What? But a new litter was never announced enough moons ago for an apprentice." Winterpaw heard a mew. Soulstar swished his tail for silence, then spoke up, "we will speak about that later. Firstly, Dappledpaw and Tansypaw have became warriors, everyone welcome Dappledcloud and Tansysun!" The clans cheered their names and Dappledcloud and Tansysun smiled and raised their chins. Chimerastar spoke after it all settled. "Now, about this apprentice?" Soulstar nodded. "A Shadowclan patrol found a rouge nearby Carrionplace, we took him in to care for him as he was hurt when we found him. But eventually, we asked if he wanted to join the clan and he said yes, so we welcome Reaperpaw into our clan." Yowls rose amongst the cats that shook

the leaves on the branches of the four trees that surrounded them. "A rouge? He's just trying to get into your head!" A spat came from another, "Shadowclan's gone insane!" An agitated cat hissed, "he's just an apprentice! Leave him alone, there's no harm he can do!" Winterpaw turned her head to look at Reaperpaw who was sunken into his fur with a grouchy look on his face. Soulstar's voice rose. "Silence! I will not be tolerating hatred against Shadowclan's new member, he is just as capable as any warrior here!" He frowned. "It seems clear to me this gathering has came to an end. Shadowclan!" He called, hopping down the Great rock as Shadowclan followed after him. Winterpaw blinked and caught up to the rest of them quickly. "Well, that was quick." Mewed Smokeleaf, looking at Winterpaw. "I think they've forgotten about the truce, I thought the clouds were going to cover the moon soon." Winterpaw nodded. Continuing to walk forward, her eyes set ahead as she ducked under the tunnel entering into Shadowclan territory. She turned her gaze to Reaperpaw who was angry, tail swishing. Soulstar seemed annoyed too, but Winterpaw could care less for Soulstar's feelings, after all he betrayed her. Winterpaw frowned, her tail now also swishing, rhythmic with most of the cats in the clan. As they entered Shadowclan territory, Winterpaw saw toads and frogs hopping here and there. Dappledcloud and Tansysun were in good spirits, Winterpaw smiled. She was ten moons now, that was right. But she'd have as many moons to go as Smokeleaf decided. Winterpaw looked at the ground, her paws touching the earth each pawstep.

Winterpaw entered the Nursery, seeing the 6 moons old Spikekit, Crimsonkit and Swiftkit, all complaining. "Has Soulstar forgotten about us!?" Hissed Spikekit. Crimsonkit ignored her and chatted with Swiftkit about it. "This is totally unfair, Dappledcloud and Tansysun become warriors early while we have to sit around a wai-" Swiftkit mewed over him. "Hello, Winterpaw!" She mewed cheerfully, Winterpaw nodded to her. "God, it's crowded in here, even *with* Glazesight back in the warriors den." All grown kits nodded in agreement, besides Spikekit who had grumbled and exited the den. Winterpaw shifted to Pumpkinkit, who was wrapped into Foxfire's tail. "How is he? Smokeleaf told me to check up on the kits." Foxfire smiled. "Pumpkinkit has three moons till he's an apprentice, I'm so proud for him." Winterpaw smiled and ducked

back out of the den. Looking at the clan, she remembered Smokeleaf telling her that Soulstar was on his last life so we had to take good care of him. Winterpaw stretched, enjoying the serenity of the clan. Everything was quiet, every cat on night duty. The wind ruffled the whiskers in Winterpaw's ears as she walked softly across to the medicine den, she stared closely at the medicine shelf and went to go collect any herbs that she was short of. Winterpaw looked up at the sky, Sundown was approaching so she had little time. Winterpaw strode across the territory, hearing the croak of a frog or the wind in her ears. She approached a batch of celandine and collected the stems, ever since treating Reaperpaw's wound she had became short on celandine, so collecting some for her and Smokeleaf would be a good idea. Winterpaw held the celandine in her mouth then approached chervil, her fur fluffed against the cold wind, and her eyes flashed, memories of Rippleleap, this was the same area. She looked at the patch her dead mother once lay and her whiskers drooped in sadness as she looked at her paws with a frown. She took the chervil and left, her ears planted to her skull. But as Sundown left and the moon had came, her eyes closed and she stopped, taking a deep breath of fresh air. Her ears rose back up and fireflies flew around her, she looked up at them as her smooth, fluffy fur fluffed against the chill wind. She took another breath, through her mouth around the bundle of herbs. She turned back and entered camp. Her eyes immediately set on the medicine den, she travelled over to the caved den and set her herbs on the shelf, Smokeleaf approvingly staring at her.

Dawn filtered through and Winterpaw crept out of the Apprentices den. Smokeleaf said since there was enough nests she could start to sleep in the medicine den in three moons. Winterpaw smiled, was she going to become a medicine cat soon? Winterpaw looked at the fresh-kill pile and saw Spikekit in front of it with Swiftkit and Crimsonkit behind. Whatever was happening there, Winterpaw guessed it was some new kit-game. Even though they'd be made apprentices tomorrow. She smiled, looking around camp. she turned her head to look at her tail full of sticks and foxtails. She started to rip them out of her tail but made sure she was careful with the foxtails as Smokeleaf informed her they're quite dangerous. Winterpaw dug up the earth and shoved all the foxtails she pulled from her tail underneath, burying them so no kits could choke on

them or get them stuck in their mouth. Winterpaw looked up at the kits as she heard commotion near them. Where they hurt? She strolled over to see Glazesight among them, Winterpaw kept a distance so the kits couldn't see her, she sat down and watched. Her attention fixed on Soulstar as he streaked past her, approaching the kits. "Now, what's going on here?" Soulstar meowed with his usual authoritative voice. Glazesight looked at Soulstar and respectfully greeted him with a dip of her head. Owlfeather walked beside Soulstar, with Foxfire coming from the opposite side. Foxfire sat and pulled Spikekit close, cleaning her ruffled fur, she stared at Crimsonkit with disappointment but still pulled him close and cleaned his fur. Glazesight cleaned Swiftkit as Owlfeather called out "Warriors of Shadowclan, come forward for your patrols today!" Winterpaw watched all the warriors filed out over to Owlfeather. Soulstar finally mewed. "Foxfire, Glazesight," he said politely, "please come to my den where we can discuss what's happened." The queens followed with their fur fluffed in defend of their kits. Soulstar turned his head to the three kits. "Crimsonkit, Spikekit, Swiftkit. Please wait in the nursery until further notice." The two queens, Glazesight and Foxfire, followed Soulstar into the leader's den and the white she-kit looked at the ground with her ears pressed to her skull. "I'm sorry." Winterpaw frowned as she saw the miserable look on Swiftkit's face. She decided to turn off into the medicine den to check on Smokeleaf. She was cleaning the herbs and Winterpaw scrambled over to help her. Winterpaw noticed Smokeleaf starting to work slower, Winterpaw frowned, but continued to sort out the dried leaves and the fresh ones. She looked up at Smokeleaf and noticed Smokeleaf was looking right at her too. "I think it's time you become a full medicine cat in about five moons." Winterpaw smiled. "So when I'm fifteen moons old? Cool!" Her eyes squinted in happiness and she looked at Smokeleaf happily.

Chapter 11

Sunrise was filtering through the apprentice den, Winterpaw heard the call of the grey Shadowclan leader; "Let all cats old enough to stalk through the darkest shadows, sit beneath the Shade Rock for a clan meeting!" Winterpaw knew what it was about, Swiftkit, Crimsonkit, and Spikekit, were finally being appointed apprentices. She could tell by the clean fur of Spikekit and Crimsonkit, along with Swiftkit who was talking to Blizzardshade after he brought his kit a lizard. Foxfire was finally let out of the Nursery now that Pumpkinkit was five moons, yet she still held Pumpkinkit in her tail as she sat beneath the clearing, Foxfire had began to treat Pumpkinkit as if her birth kit. Foxfire titled her head forward to listen and watch the ceremony of her kits finally becoming apprentices. Winterpaw sat down and curled her tail underneath her front paws, now that all cats were out in the clearing, Soulstar mewed again, bunching his muscles and projecting his demanding voice. "Today we have a ceremony that has been long overdue." Soulstar looked down into the crowd and nodded at Foxfire. "Crimsonkit, Spikekit, and Swiftkit are almost seven moons and are ready to be apprenticed." Soulstar took a breath for a couple heartbeats then spoke up again, "Spikekit, step forward." Soulstar sat patiently, waiting for Spikekit to approach the Shade Rock. Spikekit looked back at her mother quickly, then forced herself forward, her fur prickled with nervousness. Soulstar gave a glance up at the sky, waiting for acceptance from his ancestors, he then turned his scorching blue gaze back down on the ginger she-kit. "You have reached the age of seven moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Spikepaw." Soulstar gazed out into the scatter of Shadowclan cats, picking out a grey tom with darker grey

stripes out in the crowd. "Hallowedwisp, you have been proven ready to take on an apprentice. You have received excellent training from Elmleaf, and you have shown yourself to be persistent and hardworking. You will be the mentor of Spikepaw, I expect you to pass on all you know to her." Hallowedwisp stood up, his long, lush tail brushing the ground as his eyes lit with confidence. He stepped from the gather of cats, reaching out his muzzle to touch Spikepaw's. Winterpaw turned her eyes to watch Spikepaw, who looked at Swiftkit for a second with buzzing jealousy and irritation, she then looked back at her mentor with gleaming pride in herself. The crowd of cats opened their mouths and chants rose. "Spikepaw! Spikepaw! Spikepaw! Spikepaw!" Crimsonkit was loudest for his den and littermate. Winterpaw too, had chanted for the ginger apprentice. The cheers of the warriors had died down and Soulstar spoke up again, flicking
his tail to signal Crimsonkit to come forth. Soulstar spoke with certainty. "You have reached the age of almost seven moons and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Crimson*paw."* Soulstar continued, "Mudsight, although you are father of this tom, I know you will be as persistent as you have been with any other apprentice with his training and ensuring it's fulfilled thoroughly." Soulstar went on to prove to his clan Mudsight will be a good warrior. "You have shown excellent courage and bravery in all these moons you have served your clan. I am confident that you will teach this apprentice well." Mudsight, with a proud strut, came over to the clearing, and touched noses with his son, and now apprentice, Crimsonpaw. Winterpaw saw his chest puff out in pride and his eyes were shining in determination, Winterpaw knew he would not let his son down. As a couple heartbeats went by, Swiftkit rose into a mount of chanting, all others following after her. "Crimsonpaw! Crimsonpaw! Crimsonpaw! Crimsonpaw!" Crimsonpaw gave a goofy smirk at Swiftkit and left to sit next to his father. The cheers died down and Soulstar mewed. "Swiftkit." Swiftkit, who looked like they just might be immobile. Stepped up in-front of Shaderock. "Swiftkit, you have reached the age of almost seven moons and it is time for you to start warrior training. We cannot delay any longer." Soulstar repeated the annual apprenticing line, "from this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Swift*paw*." Winterpaw watched as Swiftpaw

turned her head to look at the crowd of cats, her eyes shining and wondering. Winterpaw's eyes widened, and she noticed Swiftpaw's had too, as Dappledcloud stepped out of the cluster of cats. "Dappledcloud will be your mentor." Soulstar finished quickly, preparing for what was about to happen, he bunched up his shoulders. Swiftpaw froze, and silence fell over the camp. *This silence is too loud.* Winterpaw thought to herself, then, Winterpaw clicked back to reality as a cat yowled. "What? Soulstar what are you thinking!" Winterpaw looked down to see Dappledcloud looking around, his muzzle was just about to touch noses with Swiftpaw. Winterpaw frowned, cats should be cheering, not protesting. Winterpaw heard another protesting mew, recognising it as Dahliaheart's. "Why Dappledcloud? He only recently became a warrior! Not to long ago he was an apprentice...." Dahliaheart cleared her throat, "himself!" Dahliaheart gave an apologetic look to Swiftpaw, who's fur was spiked in shock. "I don't mean this to be personal, Dappledcloud, but you do seem to be a bit inexperienced.....from a logical point of view." Dappledcloud protected his apprentice, Swiftpaw, but kept a normal, calm gaze. He towered over Swiftpaw in protection of her. Winterpaw saw Soulstar who was also looking calm, Dappledcloud was looking up at him. Winterpaw's ears cocked toward the sound of scraping rock, to see Owlfeather, his claws digging into the rock. The white deputy seemed to be losing his patience, till he got up and spat, his fur bushed up. "Silence! How dare any of you interrupt an apprentice ceremony like this? You are Shadowclan warriors! We do not behave like this! Do you have no faith in Soulstar's judgement?" Shadowclan immediately dropped into silence, their maws clamped shut and their bodies stiff. One cat that was brave enough to speak, piped up, Winterpaw recognised the body of Blizzardshade. *Oh no.* "Well? In all due respect, I do not wish to defy you, Soulstar, but why have you chosen Dappledcloud?" Winterpaw's eyes turned to the small, just waiting to be appointed, white she-cat. Staring at her father, fluffy with shock. Soulstar mewed up again, making Winterpaw turn her head to look back up at him. "I have spoken to Glazesight about this." He gave a nod to Glazesight who dipped her head respectfully. Winterpaw sighed. *I want this ceremony to be over already.* "Two quarter-moons ago, Soulstar came to me with a suggestion." Winterpaw saw Swiftpaw's ears perk up. "He asked me if it would be okay to trial with Swiftpaw about having a younger

mentor, and I am sure we're all well aware of our shortage of warriors." Winterpaw grumbled to herself. *If it wasn't for that fish eater Sandleap, we'd have Autumnpaw soon!* Winterpaw had missed out on most of Glazesight's words. But she listened in again. "—but of course I agreed. Think of it this way, a recently made warrior may be assumed to be inexperienced, but we're Shadowclan, not mouse-brains like Thunderclan." Winterpaw heard a cat let out a soft snort. Glazesight mewed up again. "Dappledcloud will still have his apprenticeship fresh in his mind which could deem to be helpful. Has Dappledcloud ever let any of you down?" *Glazesight had made sense.* Winterpaw thought, she saw every other cat nodding thoughtfully. Dahliaheart and Blizzardshade shared a glance then shook their heads. The two dipped their heads, their fur lying flat. Winterpaw turned her gaze to Dappledcloud, who finally touched muzzles with Swiftpaw. Crimsonpaw shouted, all his fur bushing up and his voice projecting through the whole clearing. "Swiftpaw! Swiftpaw! Swiftpaw! Swiftpaw!" The rest of the cats followed after him, Mudsight, who was sitting next to the red apprentice, looked like some cat just took his ears. Winterpaw noticed she too was cheering as she felt her jaw ache with the cheers. "Spikepaw! Crimsonpaw! Swiftpaw!" All Shadowclan cats joined in with cheers. Time really went by, because Sundown had approached. Moonhigh would happen soon. Winterpaw waited for the words of Soulstar. "This meeting has gone on long enough, meeting dismissed." Winterpaw immediately got up to her paws, stretching her legs and then walking over to the Medicine shelf to get rid of rotten herbs. To find Coalpaw must've already done it. Winterpaw looked at the black and white she-cat and gave a grin. Coalpaw gave a soft smile back. Winterpaw turned to the apprentice den and found Spikepaw, Crimsonpaw, and Swiftpaw who were figuring out which nest to sleep in. Winterpaw mewed "Crimsonpaw, that nest is yours." Winterpaw outstretched her left hind-leg to where Tansysun's nest used to be, that was replaced with clean, fresh moss. Smokeleaf had told her to make three new, clean nests for them. Which she was quite proud of. Crimsonpaw nestled into his nest. Swiftpaw automatically went into the one next to his, placing her paws over her muzzle. Spikepaw went to the one that looked most just-made. Winterpaw settled down into her nest, closing her eyes and drowsing into sleep.

Winterpaw's eyes opened, she gazed into the opening of the den and saw light filtering through. Winterpaw stepped out as she saw a sleeping Crimsonpaw and Swiftpaw. Passing her was Mudsight and Dappledcloud. The two warriors gave her a nod and she gave a nod back. They must be going to wake up their apprentices. Winterpaw noticed Spikepaw and Hallowedwisp had already left

Chapter 12

"All warriors come for patrols!" Owlfeather called, his mew rumbling across the camp.

Dawn light shone through the Apprentice's den, filtering through. Winterpaw narrowed her eyes as she stared through the leaves that intertwined with brambles.

"—I'd like that." Winterpaw heard the mew of Swiftpaw, if the other apprentices were up, she should be too.

Winterpaw stretched and brushed all her leaves out of her fur with her tongue. As Winterpaw exited out of the den her ears flicked down so she could fit through the den exit. She found Glazesight on her own and Winterpaw gave her a nod. Winterpaw trotted on over to the prey pile, picking out a squirrel. She clamped it in her maw then turned over into the medicine den, being greeted by Smokeleaf.

"Winterpaw, hello, it's half moon tonight." She smiled, her grey tail twitching happily.

Winterpaw smiled. "Alright, I wonder how Honeygaze's doing." She then looked down at Crimsonpaw, who was snoozing. "How is he?" Winterpaw asked, her tail giving a quick flick to get off a leaf.

"His scar is healing over time, he will be fine. Coalpaw checked on him today." Smokeleaf purred and looked at Coalpaw who sat in the back corner.

Winterpaw smiled and nodded slowly. "Will we have training today?" She questioned, looking at Smokeleaf.

Smokeleaf nodded. "Of course! What kind of question is that? In fact, let's get started now." Smokeleaf sat in-front of the medicine shelf, Winterpaw quickly followed behind.

"What is this herb used for?" Smokeleaf asked, holding a bundle of chervil delicately in her paw.

Winterpaw knew the basic herbs off by heart for now, she'd been figuring them out for twelve years. "The juice of the herb is for healing an infected wound. Yet manually chewed chervil roots are good for bellyaches." She mewed, completely sure of herself.

Smokeleaf nodded and purred. "Correct." Smokeleaf stopped to think. "How about a harder herb."

Winterpaw prepared herself, going through all the lesser-known herbs. *Ragwort leaves for aching joints, celandine for injured eyes and ease to pain, chickweed for greencough.*

Smokeleaf mewed. "What is raspberry leaves for?" She mewed, testing the apprentice and waiting for her response.

Winterpaw quickly thought to herself then her fur spiked up in excitement. *I remember this! Smokeleaf told me we might need it for Swayfern's kits when they come!* "Raspberry leaves are used to ease pain during a queen's kitting!"

Smokeleaf nodded. "Very good. Alder bark is used for?" Smokeleaf put her on edge this time.

Winterpaw's fur stuck out like a hedgehog's spikes. "Ah-uh...I don't know.." she frowned, embarrassed.

Smokeleaf looked at her. "That's okay. Alder bark is used for healing toothaches. You'll learn." She smiled.

Winterpaw's fur itched, then she nodded. "Okay." She frowned, her ear giving a flick. "At least I got two right!" She purred, focusing on the positive.

Smokeleaf nodded in agreement. "Correct. You know a lot, I have been testing you for 7 moons now. But you don't know everything just yet."

Winterpaw smiled, then heard Crimsonpaw let out a groan.

Crimsonpaw spread out his paws then hissed in pain. "Mrrrow!" The deep scratch in his back was opened up again, blood trickling from him.

Smokeleaf looked at Winterpaw. "Okay, for this time, you do it, I want to see if you use the right stuff."

Winterpaw looked at Smokeleaf and then nodded. Winterpaw grabbed goosegrass in one side of her jaw, cobweb on the other.

Smokeleaf nodded. "Good! Those are both good to use." Smokeleaf purred, sitting back again.

Winterpaw smiled. She bent down and sniffed the wound. She then began to apply the goosegrass on his long wound, after she had a free spot in her mouth he mewed. "There's no infection in the wound, so I don't need to use chervil root."

Smokeleaf purred and nodded. "Yes, but there's still one more herb you need before wrapping around the cobweb. Do you know what that is?"

Winterpaw thought for a moment. "Tormentil?" She mewed, not sure of herself.

"Close." Smokeleaf responded, "you would use goldenrod. Though they are sort of for the same thing, goldenrod works better."

Winterpaw nodded. "Okay." She mewed between the cobweb, getting up to her paws and grabbing goldenrod in her jaw. She turned back to Crimsonpaw and placed the goldenrod poultice, after appliance, she wrapped around Crimsonpaw's whole torso around with cobweb.

Crimsonpaw let out a whimper and twitched, then after the herbs soothed his wound, he sighed and closed his eyes again, fur rising and falling as he slept.

Smokeleaf looked at Winterpaw approvingly. "You did well. You are thirteen moons, correct? I reckon just two more moons and you will earn your medicine cat name." She purred.

Winterpaw's eyes shone. "Really?!" Her fur fluffed up in excitement. A few sticks sticking into her large tail. She felt Coalpaw's eyes boring into her fur. Winterpaw turned to look at Coalpaw, then Smokeleaf. "What about Coalpaw?"

"Coalpaw is exceptional for just a 12 moon cat, but a few more moons of experience never hurt any cat." She smiled, looking at Coalpaw and giving her apprentice a nod.

Coalpaw looked at her with big wide eyes, she gave a little soft smile. Her tail twitching back and forth as she slightly fixed her posture and bunched her shoulders. A proud face on Coalpaw.

Winterpaw gave an approving smile at Coalpaw then looked at the sky. "Moonhigh is on its way now, should we get going?"

Smokeleaf gave it some thought then nodded. "Alright, just let's clean up our pelts first."

Winterpaw nodded and bent her head over, drawing her tongue over her shoulder-blades. She stretched to attempt to get that hard-to-reach spot. Getting up after and twisting her head forward as if in attack pose to clean out her tail. Plucking twigs and leaves out of it.

Smokeleaf had itched behind her ear, a fat tick sticking under it.

Winterpaw's ears gave a flick. "Do you want to me to help you?" She stood up and collected mouse bile. Her nose wrinkling as the scent overwhelmed her.

Smokeleaf nodded at her, turning her head to expose the tick, lifting up her right hing-leg and cleaning between her paw-pads.

Winterpaw walked forward and rubbed the mouse-bile behind her ear. Feeling Smokeleaf's fur relax as the tick fell off. She crushed it with her paw and washed them in the puddle sitting in a hollow in the medicine den.

"Alright, let's go." Smokeleaf purred, getting up on her grey paws as her flat ears gave a flick.

Coalpaw got up and followed behind Winterpaw, in the deepest of shadows, her eyes wide as she crouched close to the ground, looking around and avoiding other cats as much as possible.

Winterpaw had excitement shimmering in her eyes as she walked forward, she couldn't believe it! She'll be a full medicine cat in 2 more moons!

Smokeleaf had stopped as they reached the Windclan border.

Emeraldheart was approaching her with Wrenpaw beside her, holding a squirrel in his mouth.

Winterpaw tipped her head, *why did Wrenpaw have fresh-kill?* She waved her tail at him in hello as he approached.

He dropped the squirrel on the ground. "Surprised I found this guy on Windclan!" He purred "I caught it!"

Smokeleaf stared at him in question. "What? Medicine cat's don't hunt.."

Wrenpaw frowned. "They don't!? Awh man!" He stomped and stared at it. "I'll just bury this then." He dug under and dropped the squirrel, digging dirt over it.

Smokeleaf shook her head and smiled. "I think you'd make a better warrior."

Wrenpaw was silent for a moment. Murmuring to himself. "Maybe..."

Emeraldheart looked at Wrenpaw and gave a flick of her tail with a frown.

Smokeleaf broke the tension quickly. "Let's get on to the Moonstone."

Winterpaw's fur fluffed in excitement as she raced across the vibrant grass, grass folding down as she stepped on it, slipping on a pile of mud and rolling forward, mud on her muzzle. She got up

and shook her fur. "Bleh!" Reaching up her paw and taking all of the mud off of it.

Smokeleaf appeared and giggled, chuckling. Emeraldheart and Wrenpaw appeared after them.

Honeygaze and Beebuzz had appeared, Frecklepool and Monarchpaw following quickly after.

Smokeleaf nodded to them all. After greetings she mewed. "Shall we head into the Mothermouth?"

They all nodded and Emeraldheart headed in first, her whiskers touching the sides. The tunnel swallowing her.

Winterpaw followed after Smokeleaf, she had grown used to the Mothermouth, figuring out how to get to the Moonstone. Her paws leading her down as she go deep into the belly of the tunnel. The blue light shining from the stones opening up to her. She squinted her eyes as the Moonstone blinded her.

She walked forward and bent her muzzle to the stone, swirling into sleep.

She woke up, looking at the other medicine cats and getting up with them. She stared at Smokeleaf and Coalpaw and followed them both, Coalpaw lagging behind to stay away.

Exiting from the Mothermouth she yawned, wanting to just curl back up in her nest.

She dipped her head to the medicine cats, being respectful as her fur was flat in the cold night.

She walked through the tall grass of Windclan as she headed back, grateful to have her paws back on the pine forest as she entered.

Entering into the Shadowclan camp she walked through the grass and into the apprentice's den, curling up into her den and placing her tail over her nose. Closing her eyes and drifting into much-needed sleep.

Chapter 13

A bird called as Winterpaw exited, the bush leaves rustled the leaves as she stalked out. The sun beams shone onto her face. She blinked. It was hot today.

All cats sprawled out in the clearing in the welcoming sun. They were all embracing the sun rays, though one cat sat out of the beams: Tempestcrow. Tempestcrow sat in the shadow, her huge paws tucker under her mane. Her eyes were narrowed as she looked narrowly eyed at Owlfeather, her claws twitched across the stone.

Winterpaw's ears flicked down. Whatever Tempestcrow's intentions were they didn't seem good. Winterpaw stared at Owlfeather now as he called for patrols.

As warriors approached, along with Tempestcrow, Winterpaw sat down and started cleaning her after-sleep fur. Narrowing her eyes and listening in as Owlfeather spoke.

Owlfeather raised his voice so all warriors at the back could hear. "Now, Tempestcrow has reported to me about rouges along the border."

Winterpaw became aware of her heart beat as she looked up. That must've been what Tempestcrow was so worried about.

Owlfeather continued, "I need a ton of warriors, Tempestcrow said there was a lot of them. I will be taking her, Dahliaheart, Hallowedwisp, Mudsight and Plumflower. Remaining warriors will stay and protect the camp in case rogues invade the camp." He meowed, tail twitching.

It seemed clouds have covered the once welcoming sun. Winterpaw stood up and prepared to tell Smokeleaf about this. She hoped Dahliaheart would be okay, her belly was looking rather plump and Smokeleaf had mentioned that last sunrise Dahliaheart had announced her pregnancy to Smokeleaf and that she wanted to tell

Reaperstorm later because she didn't know how he'd react, begging Smokeleaf to not say anything.

Dahliaheart quickly strode over to Reaperstorm, nuzzled him, and ran back to the patrol.

With a nod of Owlfeather's head, they all set out. One by one they followed the deputy's pure-white tail.

Winterpaw now sat in the medicine den, she was throwing out dead leaves with Smokeleaf, opening her muzzle in announcement. "Owlfeather said that Tempestcrow spotted rogues around Carrionplace, I think we should prepare poultices for battle wounds. He brought five warriors and himself to go chase them out. They may be a lot but I still think we should make sure."

Smokeleaf nodded. "Okay. Good idea, Winterpaw." She smiled, a purr erupting from her throat.

Coalpaw emerged from a part of the den, her after-sleep fur still there. Her fur smoothed as she cleaned it. Smoothing her tongue over her paws.

Winterpaw unloaded the last dry herb, picking up what she could in her mouth.

Smokeleaf bent her neck beside her and collected the rest, folding the dead leaves gently into her maw. She carried it and swished Winterpaw forward.

Winterpaw trotted on forward, following her lead to go discard the herbs.

Winterpaw had came back worried after had hearing yowls from the warriors at Carrionplace.

Smokeleaf's tail twitched. "We should make poultices now and go over to Carrionplace as soon as possible." She mewed, gaze darting from Winterpaw to Coalpaw as the two of them trotted over to the herb shelf. "This is a test of both of yours knowledge, I hope of the right outcome."

Winterpaw focused. She held a leaf out on her paw as she collected the needed herbs. *Moss, horsetail, goldenrod and marigold.* She chewed the gathered herbs apart from the moss. *The moss is for protecting the wound from dirt and debris.* She revised.

Coalpaw had done the exact same as Winterpaw, putting one of the leaves to the side and getting started on her second poultice. Winterpaw began to do the same.

Smokeleaf nodded approvingly and picked up as many as she could once they finished. Heading out of the medicine den with her apprentices close behind.

Winterpaw and Coalpaw collected the rest, holding the poultices in their mouths as they strode on. Winterpaw gave a smile to Coalpaw and Coalpaw gave one to Winterpaw.

Smokeleaf and her apprentices arrived to the scene, a flurry of paws rumbled through Carrionplace, hissing rising between warriors and rouges.

There were tons of them, 15 rouges were going against the warriors. *We're outnumbered!* Winterpaw thought, her fur bushing up. A call screeched through the air, Winterpaw recognised Owlfeather's voice.

"Dahliaheart! Run for help!" Owlfeather screeched, his injured white tail peeking through the rise of dust.

Dahliaheart appeared out of the dust, a wound was on her forehead that slightly blinded her as she ran, swerving between trees not so swiftly as blood seeped into her eyes.

Winterpaw ran over to the bushes, Smokeleaf and Coalpaw leaped in too, placing the poultices down and watching from afar. Winterpaw frowned. She wished she could help them *now.*

Dahliaheart had returned, Plumflower, Foxfire and Willowskip were close behind, racing straight into battle. Claws unsheathed and fur

rose up. Although it was now just 9 warriors, they were still much stronger with better skills, all working together.

The battle had ended as rouges ran away, but once the warriors cleared away from the pool of blood and heat of battle, one dead cat lay in the midst of it all. *Owlfeather.* Winterpaw walked out of the bush, eyes wide and fur bushy as she stared ahead. She dipped her head and frowned. Sitting beside Owlfeather's body and mewing. "He will reside in Starclan now."

Warriors limped closer, despite their wounds, they sat down and mourned him.

Smokeleaf whisperer under her breath. "Poor Swayfern." Turning back, she grabbed a poultice, heading over to Hallowedwisp and going over to him. "Winterpaw, Coalpaw, tend to the warriors."

Winterpaw walked over to Dahliaheart. *I hope she and her kits are okay.* "You put up a great fight Dahliaheart. Lay here and I will treat you in a second." She dropped her poultice and grabbed the moss, racing over to water it. Turning back with the damp moss in her jaw. Cantering over to her and spreading it around the open wounds. *It blocks out dirt and debris.*

Dahliaheart smiled. "Thank you." She looked down at her plump, fluffy belly. "I made sure to be careful, but great Starclan I hate rouges so much. I will always participate in every rouge fight there is. Nothing is more important then helping my clan and being a proud Shadowclan warrior."

Winterpaw nodded. "Good job, I'm glad you took good care of the kits, I can already tell that there'll be very lucky kittens in your care." She treated the wounds carefully, reassuring Dahliaheart after she winced slightly.

Dahliaheart smiled awkwardly. "Thank you, I can't wait to see Reaperstorm's reaction when he finds out." She started purring, part of it to help her heal and another part of her is simply just happy.

Winterpaw smiled at Foxfire after mending her wound. Looking

around as warriors started to have all of their wounds bandaged and cleaned up.

Arriving back at camp, Soulstar was sitting there. He had just been made announced to the news and now there was a sad look on his face. "I hope Owlfeather is hunting amazing prey in Starclan." He sighed, pawing at the grass as Moonhigh put every cat besides him and Tempestcrow asleep.

"Mhm. He fought well." Tempestcrow meowed. Her huge shape shadowing menacingly over Soulstar. "He was a great deputy. Who do you think you will be making deputy now?" Her voice was deep and dark as she asked. Almost as if she was hypnotising Soulstar.

Winterpaw's ear twitched and she snuggled herself closer into her nest, a leaf accidentally tickling Crimsonpaw's nose as he woke up and sneezed, an angry expression returned to the blueish gray she-cat. "Ha. Sorry." She looked at Crimsonpaw with an apologetic expression.

Crimsonpaw waved his paw, dismissing it. "It's fine." He dipped his head back into his paws and immediately started snoring again.

Winterpaw frowned. *How in Starclan was it so easy for him!?* She dipped her head into her belly and finally, slipped into sleep.

Dawn filtered through the apprentices' den and she heard cat's around her stretch and yawn. She opened her eyes and looked around. *Just a bit longer...Smokeleaf can teach me herbs in a second.* She curled in closer till Swiftpaw shook her awake.

"Winterpaw! Soulstar is going to pick deputy!" Swiftpaw mewed, racking Winterpaw side to side with her strong paws.

Winterpaw shoved her away. "Ok, ok!" She shook the leaves out of her fur yet hardly of them came out. Then her head lifted and her ears popped up. "Wait..he's choosing deputy now?"

As Swiftpaw was about to open her mouth to respond, a voice broke

out all conversations and ringed across the clearing.

"Let all cats old enough to stalk through the darkest shadows, sit beneath the Shade Rock for a clan meeting!" Soulstar exclaimed. His gaze sad but determined.

Warriors gathered closer, hope glittering in the senior warriors eyes. The younger warriors, have had apprentices or not, still kept content, ears perked. Their eyes bright.

Soulstar's tail curled, asking for silence. Once the sounds had died down, he spoke up again; "I say these words before Starclan, so that our warrior ancestors hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of Shadowclan is" he sighed, eyes sat on the clearing, "***Dahliaheart.***"